

RECOVERING A THEOLOGY OF
BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTRY IN
THE WESLEYAN SPIRIT

Rosario Picardo

B.A. in Religion, Houghton College, 2003
M.Div. in Wesleyan Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2007

Faculty Mentor
Peter Bellini, Ph.D.

A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
December, 2014

**United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio**

**Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project**

**RECOVERING A THEOLOGY OF
BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTRY IN
THE WESLEYAN SPIRIT**

by

Rosario Picardo

United Theological Seminary, 2014

Faculty Mentor
Peter Bellini, Ph.D.

Date: _____

Approved:

Faculty Mentor(s)

Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	v
ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
1. SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY.....	4
Context.....	15
Synergy.....	29
2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	40
Old Testament.....	40
New Testament.....	53
3. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	70
4. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	90
5. TOPICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	110
6. PROJECT, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION.....	130
APPENDIX	
A. APPENDIX A: WEEKLY PRODUCTIVITY REPORT.....	156
B. APPENDIX B: THE PARTICIPANTS.....	158
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	163

ABSTRACT

RECOVERING A THEOLOGY OF BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTRY IN THE WESLEYAN SPIRIT

by
Rosario Picardo
United Theological Seminary, 2014

Faculty Mentor
Dr. Peter Bellini, Ph.D.

This project creates and tests a sustainable and reproducible model of Trinitarian, incarnational, and apostolic church planting through bi-vocational, missiological leaders in the Wesleyan Spirit. Currently, the order of elder is not designed, equipped or deployed to reach a postmodern culture. The proposed solution is to create a new missional order that is more adaptable and flexible to operate apostolically. A qualitative case study has been conducted through interviews with individuals and colleagues. The results show that Embrace is a viable model for ministries everywhere due to the largely bi-vocational pastoral staff and minimal budget.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1.	A Church – Community Congruence Model of Church Growth	33
2.	The Decline	111
3.	Giving & Assets	112
4.	Jurisdictional Snapshot of Church Planting Activity	115
5.	Summary of Bi-vocational Ministry	131
6.	Common Patterns	139
7.	The Minimum Compensation Package for Ordained Elders in KY	152
8.	2013 Average Compensation for Ordained Elders in KAC	152
9.	2012 Embrace Church Statistics Compared to 2013 Statistics	154

ABBREVIATIONS

UMC	United Methodist Church
UM	United Methodist
RA	Resident Advisor

INTRODUCTION

Since the merger of 1968, the United Methodist Church has declined every year. It has gained some attention, but not as much as the dwindling financial resources. It is hard to conceive the financial problem when net assets have increased by 217% to total over \$52 billion dollars. Total giving has increased by 144%, and total giving by worshipers has increased by 178%. These totals take into account the inflation rate as of 2009. The finances, without a doubt, have increased at an alarming rate since 1968, but the expenses have unfortunately grown at the even more alarming rate of 44% after inflation and above expenses.¹

The real financial problem is as Lovett H. Weems says, “virtually everything related to people went down, such as the number of churches, worship attendance, membership, professions of faith, and children and youth.”² While the spending has gone up, the giving has gone down, and that was exacerbated by the 2008 recession, where there was a \$60 million dollar decline.³ With no new people coming in, and the main givers in the UMC aging, it is the same people carrying a heavier load, and it is crushing them. For instance, more than 10,000 of our 35,000 local churches have

¹ 212. Lovett H. Weems, *Focus: The Real Challenges That Face the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), Kindle edition.

² Ibid., 219.

³ Ibid., 235.

thirty-five or fewer people present for worship on a typical Sunday. The vast majority of these churches were built to serve the population as it was 100 years ago when 40% of Americans made their living by farming.⁴ This is a clear indication that people are leaving the church and it is time for pastors and congregations to work on addressing why this is happening.

There are practical solutions to make a “stop-gap” financially, but that does not necessarily solve the problem related to vision/mission, attracting new people, and creating vitality in the life of a congregation. Not to say that the following are not important, but instead of focusing on spending cuts, reducing the sizes of districts and annual conferences, and creating programs, there has to be more of a focus on building people up, and the greatest avenue to do this is in the local church. This calls for investing in the major players, who are the clergy and laity. This also calls for focus on the gap that exists between these two parties.

A Problem within Embrace Church

Even though God has gifted and shaped me for the specific call of pastoring Embrace Church in its three distinct expressions of The Gathering, the Epworth Campus, and the Kentucky Theatre Campus, and Embrace Church continues to grow each year, there are many challenges. These challenges have taken a toll on me. As the leader of a discipleship structure for three congregations, I am experiencing burnout, and there is little money to hire additional support staff.

⁴ 3127. Gilbert R. Rendle, *Journey in the Wilderness: New Life for Mainline Churches* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), Kindle edition.

Also, there are retention and momentum problems within Embrace Church. The downtown Kentucky Theatre campus continues to attract new people, but has an overall retention problem and has lost momentum due to giving up some of its critical mass in order to send families over to the Epworth Campus. The Epworth Campus has a majority of givers over the age of sixty-five. Many of them prefer traditional worship and do not want to give up this preference in order to reach out to the younger generations. The Gathering service is ministering to those who are in constant need, but requires a leader who can take the ministry to the next level in numerical growth and fundraising. However, in the midst of these challenges, Embrace is on a solid path to reaching self-sustainability and continued future growth. Embrace is able to operate on a shoestring budget and have a maximal impact. In large, this is due to the heavily bi-vocational pastoral staff, which I believe is a model for ministries everywhere.

CHAPTER ONE

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A Redemptive Story of Healing

I am a wounded person. There is no doubt about that. However, with God's help, I have become a wounded healer. Along my spiritual journey, I have experienced brokenness and all people have when they really think about it. Fortunately, through Jesus I have begun to find restoration. It was finding healing for my soul that motivated me to help others find healing, which all culminated for me in starting Embrace Church in Lexington, Kentucky. Of course, before I planted this church I went through a decade-long journey of hurt and healing, joy and pain, mundane and extraordinary.

My parents and two older sisters emigrated from Sicily to Western New York in the late 1970s. My mother, Angela, was in her late thirties, and my father, Salvatore, was about forty-five years old. They came over to the United States without knowing any English, and they only had first grade educations. My family wanted to experience freedom and prosperity so they came to the United States for opportunities to better their lives. My parents worked in the factories and my sisters were enrolled in the local public schools. My family began to better themselves financially over the next couple of years.

My mother and father were forty-two and forty-seven, respectively when I was born. My mother Angela said I was a gift to the family from God. I was baptized in a Catholic Church as an infant and began my upbringing as a Catholic. My family was not devoutly Catholic, but they attended the church occasionally because Catholicism was the only religion they had ever known. I can now see God's grace in my life through God leading my family to the United States and then through my infant baptism. I believe that my infant baptism was a sign from the Lord that I was destined to serve him, and the Lord's grace has been poured out on my life ever since.

Although, we lived largely in poverty like many other immigrant families, I remember going to Italy when I was seven years old. I had a holy moment during this visit to see extended family in Sicily. My mother and I were in my uncle's workshop where there was a picture of Jesus displayed on the wall. This picture jumped out at me. I did not really know anything about Jesus at the time. All I knew was that I could not leave that workshop without the picture. So, I begged and pleaded with my uncle and my mother to let me have the picture of Jesus. Now, I see it as God reaching out to me in a special way. At the age of ten, I had another God moment. I was visiting my sister, Lina, in Rome, New York. While I stayed with them for the summer, I attended a protestant church. That summer at the local Wesleyan church I met an older saint in her 80s who was mentoring my sister. This older woman told Lina that God had a calling on my life to be a minister. I had no idea what that even meant in my ten-year-old mind. However, God reminded me of this sign of prevenient grace years later as an adult.

In late August 1994, when I was fourteen years old, something happened to me. Again I was with Lina and her husband Larry, and they convinced me to attend a church service with them. Once I went to the service, somehow they persuaded me to go to this Church of God youth camp. It changed my life forever. I was in awe because none of the campers around me were using profanity, which I often used. Also, the other kids spoke about the Lord, to which I was not accustomed. I enjoyed myself. The events that really impacted me were the singing of praise songs and the evening preaching, which was delivered by the pastor of Abundant Life Church of God, Rodney Mullins.

One of the evening services he preached is still burned into my mind today. Pastor Mullins asked the youth at the end of his preaching if they wanted to go to Heaven and be with Jesus, or if they were unsure, to raise their hands. Immediately, I raised my hand, not really knowing how it would change my life. I went to the altar and prayed a prayer that asked Christ to forgive me and become the Lord of my life.

A week after I attended this youth camp, I enrolled in the Christian school that Abundant Life Church of God was starting. It was a miracle that I was able to go to this school because there was a tuition fee that I figured my father would be unable to pay. Surprisingly, my father said yes, and so I began a three-year journey in an environment that shaped my early Christian experience. Attending the Christian school and participating in church three times per week outside of school meant I was constantly around Christian people. Pastor Rodney Mullins was one of the greatest influences on my spiritual growth as both the pastor of the church and principal of the school. It was

through his fiery Pentecostal preaching that I received a call to vocational ministry. It was at the age of sixteen that I preached my first sermon in front of the whole church. This sermon was on Acts 16 where Paul and Silas were thrown in prison and subsequently converted the jailor. After hearing me preach, many in the congregation affirmed my call to ministry. Shortly after my preaching experience, Pastor Mullins felt led to prophesy over me in front of the congregation. The words contained in that prophesy are still vivid to me because Pastor Mullins said that I would someday be preaching in front of a large group of people and that many would be healed through the ministry that God would give me.

My family story is much like one right out of the book of Acts. After I made a decision for Christ and started attending the Christian school, my parents and other sister became Christians and experienced life transformation.

My three-year training stint at Abundant Life Church of God was foundational for my Christian walk, but at the same time I was not a balanced Christian with sound doctrine and theology and was in a legalistic environment that was very unhealthy. I was always at church. It was during this time that I saw the ugly side of the church. I began to grow bitter at some of the hypocritical actions of the church leaders, especially the pastor, Rodney Mullins. My family and some of the other church members grew to have reasonable suspicion that Pastor Mullins was embezzling money from the church and school. These suspicions led to my family leaving the church. I began to doubt if God had really called me into ministry and if my salvation was real because Rodney Mullins was

not the man that he appeared to be. When we left the church, I returned to the public school system.

Going back into the public school system was a difficult transition for me in more ways than one. However, God used me in one significant way. It was through my friendship with Dave Feliciano that we both grew. Dave was into the party scene and viewed me as a little awkward socially, mainly because I did not know how to interact with others because of my confinement in the church and Christian school. We became friends and I made an agreement with Dave that if I helped him learn about the Bible, then Dave would tutor me in math and biology. Because he liked to party, when we were not studying, we started attending parties, and soon my reputation began to grow. I developed a tough guy attitude and started getting into trouble. I started to spend less time praying, reading the Bible, and going to church. I was not hanging out with positive influences and surrounded myself with the wrong crowd. Not only did I become involved in fighting and drinking, but I also found myself gambling and selling drugs. Now, I look back on these party years as a way for God to help me relate to some of the things that many other people experience.

During my senior year of high school, I felt God leading me to attend Houghton College. Then, after the completion of my freshman year at Houghton, I decided to join the United States Marine Corps Reserves. It was at boot camp that this God, a God that I thought I had sought out, was in actuality seeking me throughout my entire life. From

that point on, I knew I wanted to be a chaplain and help serve the men and women of the Marine Corps and Navy.

Returning to Houghton was a difficult transition. However, my sophomore year ended up being very pivotal because I wreaked havoc in the dorm and found myself in the Resident Director's office regularly. That year my RA, Mike Vreeland, was ready to quit because of my friends and me. Needless to say, Mike did not quit and neither did my outrageous behavior, like breaking into his room or getting drunk in the dorms for at least a semester and a half until a change occurred in my life. I was making plans for my living arrangements for the following year when God interrupted my plans by calling me to be an RA. I went from wreaking havoc on the dorm to becoming one of its leaders! My friend Jason took me under his wing and began to mentor me for my remaining time at Houghton. It was through our times together I grew spiritually as a godly man.

My previously unbalanced beliefs as a young Christian began to change while I studied at Houghton, a Wesleyan school. At Houghton, I learned about Biblical Literature and the theology of John Wesley. My junior year, I decided to enter the Wesleyan Church's tract for ordained ministry.

As a United States Marines Corps reservist in 2003, I knew many of my fellow Marines that were serving or had served in various capacities around the world. During this time, many thoughts ran through my mind. Some of them concerned the fact that I could possibly die or that I would not see my family and friends for a long time. The idea of attending Asbury Theological Seminary crept into my mind because many of

my Houghton professors in the religion department attended there. There was no telling if I would ever be able to attend the seminary. I was fortunate that the Houghton College community began praying about my situation, and through their prayers I began to feel a peace about having to leave. I was encouraged through Romans 8:31-39, a passage that became a reality to me. I was willing to leave because I knew that the Lord would use me wherever I was placed. I realized that no matter where I went, God's love was going to surround me and that the God of the United States was also the God of the Middle East.

Through my circumstances, God showed himself to me in a new way. I knew that I could have received the call to leave for war at any time so I hurried along and tried to finish up my class work so that I could graduate before being called to war. I knew that this was important because I had been accepted to Asbury Theological Seminary, and I was also filling out paper work for the Chaplain Candidate Program. God provided a miracle for me to receive my degree early, get commissioned and attend seminary instead of being deployed.

Leaving Houghton to attend Asbury was a big step for me because Asbury was so far away from New York. The move was especially challenging because I did not know anyone at Asbury; I just knew that God wanted me to be there. In my first year at Asbury, God brought me another "lifeboat" to speak into my life and mentor me, Peter Bellini. Peter shared my life experiences regarding ministry, marriage, and family with me. Peter commuted from Dayton, Ohio to Asbury, in Kentucky, on a weekly basis to work on his PhD in Philosophy of Missions. I felt that God had directly placed Peter in my life for

that season to encourage, mold, and shape me. I met Peter in the cafeteria and was automatically drawn to him because of our numerous mutual interests such as our Sicilian heritage, passion for sports, and most of all love for God.

It is through this mentoring relationship with Peter that I stopped dismissing my early Christian charismatic experiences but instead learned to embrace them through the lens of the sound theology that I learned at Asbury. I was spiritually lopsided in my early days as a Christian. At Houghton, I was extreme in the opposite way. But, at Asbury God used my relationship with Peter to bring me into a balanced belief system where I could understand how to back up my experiences with theology. Being on both sides of the spectrum gave me a valuable understanding and respect for the differences between the Pentecostal and Wesleyan-Methodist movements.

In my first year of seminary, I started dating [REDACTED] and married her on August 13, 2005 against some counsel from my friends. I felt this relationship was something that God had orchestrated. [REDACTED] had a passion for spiritual formation and Christian discipleship. After marrying, we moved into an urban neighborhood to live out ministry at The Rock/La Roca United Methodist Church. [REDACTED] joined the staff as an administrative pastor, and I took on my first staff position at the church as custodian, which was very humbling for me.

During our first year of marriage [REDACTED] had an affair with an elderly church member over several months. I knew things were not going well with the marriage before I found out about the affair. [REDACTED] wanted to remain married. After much prayer and

godly counsel, I decided to file for divorce. This was not an easy decision, but I felt I had to do it. I was devastated, and the years that followed involved pursuing wholeness and healing through prayer, Scripture, an accountability group, counseling, and mentoring. I was faced with the question: Do I take a break from this whole ministry endeavor before I ever get a chance to start it? By this time, it was the spring of 2007 and God continued to confirm that His calling on my life had not changed in spite of the circumstances I faced. I left the marriage a broken man, but my heart for ministry was still intact.

My time at The Rock/La Roca gave me a passion for the local church and caused me to pursue ordination in the UMC. I was obedient to God's call and resigned my commission with the U.S. Navy as a chaplain. When I graduated seminary a pivotal opportunity opened up. I went from being the church custodian to being the associate pastor of the church and preached regularly while stepping up in leadership. The people in the congregation did not know I had these types of gifts and graces for ministry. A new senior pastor took a risk on me, and it paid off. .

Planting Embrace Church

While I was in my new role, God called me to plant churches for broken and hurting people. This was a challenge that scared me to death. However, my life and ministry experiences gave me a unique skill-set paired with the desire for the challenge. My skills were continuing to be developed while working at The Rock/La Roca in every role from custodian to pastor. Although my heart was scarred through experiences that

had left me a broken man, I found healing in my brokenness through my relationship with Christ. I wanted other broken people to experience the same healing I found. This desire spurred the vision of planting Embrace Church in Lexington, KY.

Embrace Church started in my one bedroom basement apartment with two other friends, who enjoyed having dinner together. The idea was that they would invite friends who did not have a Christian faith community or were not Christians. These small gatherings slowly grew into larger gatherings. While Embrace continued the outreach dinners and evangelism efforts, we began a pivotal activity, house church. Soon after these worship times began, I knew it was time to start a Sunday morning worship experience for people. After a long search, God opened only one door, the door of the historic Kentucky Theatre in downtown Lexington. Embrace opened its doors in the Theater on January 18, 2009.

There were many ups and downs for me during the early days and months of Embrace Church. However, I never gave up and stuck with it. Although, my vision was coming to pass, the one thing that was missing in my life was a wife. I wanted a partner in ministry. I gave my close friends permission to speak into my life concerning this subject, which was one of the wisest moves I made.

One day, in September of 2009, I was meeting a marketing contact at Starbucks. This contact was helping me launch a social media campaign for Embrace Church. After the meeting, I was introduced to Callie, who was meeting with the same man after me. Callie told me about her organization, Kentucky Christian Foundation, which has the

mission of providing an outlet for people to become more generous givers. We exchanged contact information and I e-mailed her a few days later to get together. After much pursuit and getting to know her, I knew Callie was the type of woman I wanted to marry, and on July 24, 2010 we were married. I felt God was starting to restore what was lost and added even more blessings to my life.

Part of this restoration and redemption process came at a difficult time in my ministry, as I was trying to find a permanent ministry venue for Embrace Church. After many months of long negotiations, all the doors being pursued were slammed shut until I found the Kentucky Theater through a friend's recommendation to check it out. Embrace launched, and, after a short period of time, started to grow. When Embrace was experiencing growth, my former church, The Rock/La Roca, was experiencing decline. In June 2011, The Rock/La Roca joined with Embrace Church through a Conference facilitated merger and became known as Embrace Church: Epworth Campus. I went from being the custodian of this church to being the lead pastor. The transition was not an easy one as I became responsible for overseeing three different congregations, Epworth, The Gathering and Downtown. I have always felt that God has uniquely shaped and gifted me for my call to ministry. God has made, and is making me, a wounded healer. Henri Nouwen sums it up best when he says, "Jesus is God's wounded healer: through his wounds we are healed. Jesus' suffering and death brought joy and life. His humiliation brought glory; his rejection brought a community of love. As followers of Jesus we can also allow our wounds to bring healing to others."¹

¹ "What's New," What's New, accessed August 14, 2013, <http://www.henrinouwen.org/>.

Context

One Church, Multiple Congregations

Embrace Church is one church with three diverse communities located in Lexington, Kentucky that reaches out to people across the city. The congregations are The Gathering, the Epworth Campus, and the Kentucky Theatre Campus, the latter being the original campus that was started. The Gathering and the Epworth congregations each meet at the 1015 North Limestone location. The Gathering congregation meets on Monday evenings and the Epworth Campus congregation meeting on Sunday mornings. The Kentucky Theatre congregation has been meeting downtown on Sunday mornings since 2009. I believe the multisite model is necessary for a number of reasons to meet the needs of today's changing world.

“Our deepest desire is to see the church renewed, renewed through making disciples and encouraging disciples to grow deeper in their faith and closer to God and neighbor. What this means, though, for different persons is, well, quite different. For some, the environment created in a traditional church setting is comfortable and inviting. It reminds them of good things from their past, or maybe it just seems the “right” context for worshipping God. On the other hand, some folks have had terrible experiences in local churches during earlier parts of their lives. For these, the least inviting place is a traditional church, even though they might be at a place in their lives where they long for a deeper, more meaningful spiritual dimension to their lives. We are intentional about making one of our worship centers about as non-threatening as one can imagine—a movie theater, a place where just about everyone has been at one time or another. Finally, some of our sisters and brothers face particular physical needs. Their desire to worship, to be closer to God, is obstructed by those physical needs. For these, we offer the Gathering, a more informal worship service, in the traditional church setting, but coupled with a time for an evening meal and fellowship. Our goal is always to spread

the good news of Jesus Christ, and our differing campuses and different worship services are based in our desire to be in mission to all of God's people, wherever they may be and in whatever setting they might most feel at ease."²

Our mission is to "embrace God and to embrace others who have been hurt, rejected, broken, and burned out on merely looking religious."³ As the founding/merging pastor, I believe God has called me to complete the specific and unique task of leading Embrace Church to a level of sustainability and further growth. My life experiences, passions, and skills have been tailored for this ministry.

History and Description of the Church

Embrace Church has an interesting history. It was birthed out of my own brokenness and healing from a divorce with the intention of reaching people from all walks of life who suffered from various hurts. I left my position as custodian turned associate pastor at The Rock/La Roca in 2008 to start Embrace Church out of a vision God had given me. I had few resources, no building, not much money except for what the UMC was seeding me, no people, but a burden to reach the lost. As I met people out at local coffee shops and bars, a team started to form. Out of this team, we started community dinners with the intent of inviting friends who did not have a home church or were not professing Christians. The dinners started to grow, and I realized people needed to go deeper in their faith, so I started leading a worship service in my house with the

² Rosario Picardo, "Embrace Church," Embrace Church, January 10, 2009, One Church, Multiple Communities, accessed August 14, 2013, <http://www.embraceyourcity.com/>.

³ Ibid.

intent of finding a facility that would later become more of a permanent home. During the early period of 2008, my team and I did several evangelism outreach events like giving away cold bottled waters in the park on hot summer days and even going door to door giving away loaves of Great Harvest Bread and conducting surveys that went along with the demographical data we were compiling to research for the official launch of Embrace Church.

After months of looking for space to launch the church, we finally landed on The Kentucky Theatre right in the heart of downtown Lexington, Kentucky. On January 18, 2009, we launched services on Sunday morning and continue to be there after four and a half years. The Kentucky Theatre campus serves as a movie theatre and performance facility at all other times except when Embrace is in worship services on Sunday mornings at 11:00 a.m. and during the setup and tear down of equipment that takes place before and after service.

The Kentucky Theatre Campus of Embrace Church reflects the current population of the downtown community. The congregation is made up of many college students and young professional ranging from eighteen to thirty-five years of age, the homeless population, homosexuals, and even a few people who are empty nesters between fifty and sixty years old. Many of the parishioners walk or live close by. Approximately 70% or so drive in from suburban areas. Over the next ten years, the immediate population in a half-mile radius of the theater will grow by about 16%. Of the area residents, 23.4% are high school graduates (GED) and 19.4% have some college but no degree. The population is

made up mostly of college students or those starting careers between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four. However, over the next five years this population is expected to decline by 39%, possibly due to more student housing being constructed closer to the University of Kentucky campus. The two major increases in population will be singles and young families ages twenty-five to thirty-four. This demographic is expected to increase by 69%. The number of young children between the ages of birth to four is expected to increase by 152%. The ratio between men and woman is split evenly for the most part. Since a younger population is the majority, it is no surprise that 73% of the total population has never been married. The leading household income demographic is less than \$10,000 per year. Over 50% of families with children have no male present in the home. The breakdown is that 70.2% are Caucasian, and 21% are African American. Housing is 84% renter-occupied, while 38.3% of families are below the poverty level. The data shows that very few area residents are career-motivated. For example, only 2.6% say that they want to reach the very top of their career, which is significantly lower than the state average.⁴

In the realm of religious practices, 53% considered themselves to be spiritual persons, with 49% identifying as conservative evangelicals. The religious activities include 18% who enjoy watching religious programming, 17% believe it is important to

⁴ *Church Demographics From MissionInsite*, report, 40507 Downtown Lexington, accessed February 07, 2012, <http://www.missioninsite.com/>.

attend religious services, and only 11% say their faith is really important to them. A predominate social value is that over 50% have strong convictions on recycling.⁵

Many homeless congregate right down the street from the church theater, both at the local library and in Phoenix Park in front of the library. City officials estimate over 1,200 homeless people live in Lexington.⁶ In a survey conducted at Triangle Park, a few blocks from the Kentucky Theatre campus, 64% of the homeless who socialize there claim to have visited the park between five and seven times during the previous week.⁷ Also, 39% of all the homeless interviewed at Phoenix Park said they had been diagnosed at some point with a mental illness.⁸ Many of them are not welcome in local business establishments. According to a number of homeless, there are not many bathrooms accessible to them or a fresh water supply to quench their thirst.

The racial and socioeconomic diversity represented in our Kentucky Theatre campus has given Embrace Church the reputation of being a missional outreach community. The community draws many who have not been to church in years or never have been in their entire lives yet feel welcome in a nonthreatening setting such as a movie theatre. Also, about half of our community population is homeless friends who receive breakfast and a warm cup of coffee that are being served by people in our

⁴ *Church Demographics From MissionInsite*, report, 40505 North Limestone St., accessed February 07, 2012, <http://www.missioninsite.com/>.

⁶ Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing Count 2009, report (Lexington: Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative in Collaboration with Catholic Action Center, 2009), 2.

⁷ Phoenix Park Survey Report, report (Lexington: Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative in Collaboration with Catholic Action Center, 2009), 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

community who want to do more than just sit in a pew and instead prefer to be active in worship through their service.

Embrace Church's Kentucky Theatre campus truly laid the groundwork and DNA for what was to follow as Embrace Church expanded with The Gathering and Epworth Campus on the north side of Lexington. Similar to the Kentucky Theatre campus in reaching a diverse population, these two other communities fulfill the overall vision and mission of Embrace Church.

The Epworth Campus: Past and Present

After Embrace Church started in the Kentucky Theatre, we slowly began to realize the obstacles of having space we could only use on a limited basis. Having a permanent location could mean opportunities for a safer nursery, space for small groups, discipleship, meetings, and general events. In our attempts to lease or purchase a building, after many disappointing doors slammed shut, an unlikely door opened up: my former church, The Rock/La Roca. The Rock/La Roca had experienced a lot of decline in attendance, struggled financially, and was about to close down. In June 2011, The Rock/La Roca joined with Embrace Church under the name Embrace Church Epworth Campus with a Monday night congregation being planted called The Gathering. The Sunday morning service at Epworth was treated as a church plant as well since the attendance numbers were so low prior to the merger.

The Epworth Campus was built in North Lexington where it was originally known as Epworth UMC. For years, Epworth's primacy focus was on making disciples, influencing the surrounding neighborhoods, and sending people out in ministry. Epworth's identity was cultivated with its famous Sunday services of the 1990's before it was renamed The Rock/La Roca on July 7, 2002. As previously stated, it later merged with a UMC church plant, Embrace, which later renamed the church Embrace Church Epworth Campus. The First UMC of Lexington originally birthed Epworth as a mission church. The original membership included 113 Caucasians and 70 African Americans, which was unique to the location in the southern United States, as some parts of the region had been slow to racially integrate. On November 20, 1894, the first brick was laid. The second facility was built on Walnut Street in 1919, a building that is still standing.⁹

In 1939, Epworth experienced rapid church growth, which was demonstrated by 138 persons who joined the congregation. This was primarily due to the United States engaging in World War II. People were turning to the Church. Epworth's original church building was filled to capacity leaving virtually no room for cars to park. This growth forced the church to relocate again to the current location on 1015 North Limestone, Lexington, Kentucky. At the time, the land that the church purchased in 1947 on North Limestone was considered being "in the country." The new church building was opened on October 8, 1950. Many of the elderly members can remember the sacrifice that went into building the facility. The fundraising and construction of the building resembled

⁹ Charlotte Worthington, "History of Epworth Church," interview by author, January 30, 2012.

something out of the book of Acts where, for the sake of the Kingdom, many sold possessions, remortgaged their homes, and worked more than a forty hour work weeks to save extra money to literally buy each brick for the building.¹⁰ Ninety-year-old June Tunstill, a member for sixty-nine years, who lives in the same house near the church, recalled how she and her family would walk to church and prayer services in order to open parking spaces for other families who would have to travel a distance to church. June believes the church building built on North Limestone brought the congregation closer together because it was a task that everybody had to participate in to make happen. God provided for Epworth one step at a time, brick by brick.¹¹

Over forty persons have been equipped, trained, and sent out to full time Christian ministry in the 114-year history of Epworth. Originally, Epworth's priorities were to send out, support, and plant churches; the great people of Epworth reached out to thousands. In spite of a decline in attendance, a church split, and becoming a church facing near death, the faithful of Epworth's congregation remained committed to their church and neighborhood.¹² The reason for decline was a similar trend that developed all across the United States where many of the people in the congregation earned more money and wanted to move to more luxurious housing on the other side of town. Soon the older church members started attending churches built in nearby areas, and Epworth was left with a different population to reach. Church growth theologian, Hollis Green, would

¹⁰ June Tunstill, "History of Epworth Church," interview by author, February 02, 2012.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Tom Eblen, "History of Epworth Church," interview by author, February 03, 2012.

likely classify Epworth as a church that became imprisoned by previous patterns. Whether they understood it or not, they chose not to be relevant to the contemporary society.¹³ The few church members who remained at Epworth soon became inactive because they did not have a sense of urgency toward change.¹⁴ The surrounding neighborhood in North Lexington evolved as people moved out to the north and south sides of town where they began attending Centenary UMC, Southern Hills UMC, and Southland Christian Church. There was a direct correlation between when Epworth started declining in the 1970s and when the other aforementioned churches started multiplying at a rapid rate. Epworth was not the only church affected by the change. Other once prominent churches on North Limestone suffered dramatic losses as well. The transformation of the neighborhood ushered in an era where poverty-stricken people and minorities became the main population.

Now, the neighborhood is hardly recognizable compared to how it once was. June, the nearly lifelong member, remembers the time when she knew every single person in the neighborhood. She recalls one occasion when her husband was sick and needed penicillin shots. It was not difficult to find a doctor, especially because there were more than four doctors who lived on her street. She described how she did not know exactly who was going to come at six o'clock to give her husband the shot he needed, but

¹³ Hollis L. Green, *Why Churches Die; a Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth*, (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1972), 37.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

she knew that one of the doctors would come. Back then she said they refused to take any money for those types of services; they did it as a godly gesture.¹⁵

In 1999, Epworth United Methodist Church split. This was mainly due to a faction of the church not agreeing with the pastor, who wanted to attract the youth and locals. The pastor saw the need for a change but it seemed that he acted too quickly and did not get the entire congregation on board with his vision. After the split, a new reality began to set in: a church that was once filled with children and youth now had no more young people. The other sad reality was that the older congregation was dying.¹⁶

In July of 2002, the church voted to be the first “Restart” UMC in the Kentucky Conference. This “Restart” included a merger with Capilla Cristiana, a Disciples of Christ Mission that had been meeting in Epworth’s Chapel. This merger resulted in the name change to The Rock/La Roca UMC. Prior to the restart, Capilla Cristiana met separately because they were Hispanic and some of the Epworth members did not want them to use the church’s main sanctuary. The assistant pastor, Irma Rodriguez was on board with the restart even before Wes Olds was appointed as the senior pastor because the Kentucky Conference approached Rodriguez and the Disciples of Christ for the restart. Prior to coming to The Rock/La Roca, Olds was on staff at Centenary UMC where he had a passion to plant a church, but Centenary was not interested in sponsoring it. Around the same time, the New Congregational Church Development team from the Kentucky Conference approached Olds with the opportunity to be appointed at The

¹⁵ Charlotte Worthington, "History of Epworth Church," interview by author, January 30, 2012.

¹⁶ June Tunstill, "History of Epworth Church," interview by author, February 02, 2012.

Rock/La Roca. Originally, the Kentucky Conference's plan for The Rock/La Roca was that they would be a church that included a Hispanic ministry with a Hispanic pastor. It became called the "Unity Project," which was comprised of the Lexington District Superintendent and local UM pastors. For the first six weeks of the restart, all were welcome to come to the prayer meeting that was being held in the sanctuary. At first, there was a little tension with old members, new leadership, and members of Capilla Cristiana, but then a Hispanic woman named Magdalena began weeping. As she began weeping, she started to sing, "Thank you, Jesus" in Spanish. It was at that point when walls started crumbling and people started seeking God's will for The Rock/La Roca. There was an awareness that the only way for old patterns to die was for the Spirit of God to enter in the restart process.

Early on, Olds recognized the need to have capable leaders developing a mission and vision for the church. In the beginning, this was not taking place because of a lack of leadership. There were several interviews issued for people who wanted to be on the "Lead Team." The Rock/La Roca needed to have a new group in place that would combine the different committees of the church meeting as one group. The people in those current positions prior to the restart had to resign and then reapply. Few wanted to step up in any kind of leadership role; therefore, recruiting had to be done from outside the church. As the church's "Lead Team" formed, they made an important decision. They no longer wanted to divide by race, and Rodriguez became the associate pastor instead of the Hispanic pastor in charge of the Hispanic ministries. Rodriguez and Olds shared with

both congregations that they were pastors together, and for the first three months, they visited as many people as they could.¹⁷

The first two weeks of the “Restart” resulted in an attempt for a coup d'état. A few members of the congregation conspired to have Olds brought up on charges. These were a few staff people Olds mistakenly left on who ended up being fired for trying to undermine the church's leadership. Not only were people problems on the list of dealings, but they also had facility problems. The massive commercial sump pump failed and created a historic flooding of the basement. There were breaches in security that took place involving multiple incidents of vandalism and robberies as well.¹⁸

The Rock/La Roca realized the reason for its existence, i.e. to call people into transforming relationships with Jesus and one another. After countless interviews, the main theme heard throughout was that the church was welcoming of all people. The Rock/La Roca was made up of dynamic mosaic of believers. This mosaic was made up of twenty-seven different countries, different colors, traditional worship preferences, contemporary preferences, young people, and older people. In recognizing the diversity of the neighborhood, God brought diversity to the church. The structure of the services changed. On Wednesday nights, prayer service became welcoming of all people even if they did not speak English. Every few months, there was one Sunday morning service

¹⁷ Irma Rodriguez, “History of Epworth Church,” interview by author, February 02, 2014. Irma was the former pastor of Capilla Christina.

¹⁸ Wes Olds, “History of Epworth Church,” interview by author, February 02, 2014. Wes Olds was the restart pastor of The Rock/La Roca.

known as a “Kingdom service” which unified all the people as one congregation no matter what language they spoke or worship preferences they had.¹⁹

Lessons Learned and a Vision for the Future

In asking Olds what was one thing that he would do differently if he had to do it over again based on what he knows now, he responded with a few points. The first thing would have been to take a stronger stand at the beginning of the restart when it came to church staffing and with the Kentucky Conference. Olds made the decision to keep the choir director and organist from Epworth, but they ended up undermining everything that the leadership tried to do. They became an anchor point, and Olds had to fire them. As far as the Kentucky Conference, Olds would have expressed clear expectations for the conference to help with the church from the very beginning of his tenure. The promises made by the conference were not kept, and he let it slide which is something that he regrets. He also would have pushed for a mother church because, at the time, nobody wanted to partner with the church. In spite of that, the church still grew. However, that made Olds’ four years at the church feel like ten!²⁰

The restart in 2002 ushered in signs of life that resurrected the church, their ministries, and their context for a period of four years. However, the change in leadership was not sustainable for the ministry because the vision of the new pastor was different from the vision of the previous pastor. As a result, the church dipped to its lowest point in

¹⁹ Venus Baily, “History of Epworth Church,” interview by author, February 02, 2014. Venus Baily was a former lead team member during the restart.

²⁰ Wes Olds, “History of Epworth Church,” interview by author, February 02, 2014. Wes Olds was the restart pastor of The Rock/La Roca.

2011. They laid off all their staff except the pastor and a part-time office administrator. There were outstanding bills piling up, and the older congregants were worried the church was going to close. The congregational makeup was about sixty in attendance on Sunday mornings with the average age being seventy years old.

Demographics

Today, within about a half-mile radius of Embrace Epworth Campus, a slight (6.65%) growth in population is expected over the next five to ten years. Of the area residents, 31.7% have a high school diploma or GED, 20.2% have some college, and 19.9% attended high school without achieving a diploma. Most (30.7%) in the area are families and empty nesters. Singles and young families make up 16.9% of the population and 14% are in mandatory schooling (ages five to seventeen). The highest population demographic by age group is five to thirteen year olds. This age group will continue to grow at an average rate of 11.2% per year until the year 2016. The area is male dominated (53.3%) versus 46.7% female, and 56.8% of the females have never been married, along with 66.4% of the males. There are 21.6% of the households that earn between \$15,000 and \$24,999 per year. Over half the population is white, with 27% African Americans and 16.8% Hispanic or Latinos. There are 58.2% who rent their homes, and 41.8% own their home. There are 37.5% employed at white color jobs. Almost two-thirds (62.5%) are employed in blue-collar professions. The top charitable contributors to the neighborhood last year were religious organizations. Those who regard it important to attend religious service are 17.8% of the population. There are

18.7% who said faith was very important to them. Those who enjoyed watching religious programming were 19.9% of the population. Finally, 42.2% considered themselves a spiritual people and 33.2% called themselves conservative evangelical Christians.²¹

Synergy

Synergy is one of those factors that is hard to put into exact words, but you know when you have experienced it. It is very similar to a talent agent witnessing an emergent star and boasting that this future star has the “it” factor. Again, it is hard to put into words; however, when you witness it, it becomes hard to deny. I believe the way God has wired me, Rosario Picardo, with my personality and life experiences, has been a call that did more than plant Embrace Church in the Kentucky Theatre, but a call that has brought me full circle to the very place I went through my divorce and took my first staff position as a custodian. I think the expansion of Embrace Church has been a synergistic event. Webster’s dictionary defines synergy as “a mutually advantageous conjunction or compatibility of distinct business participants or elements.”²² This is precisely what happened when God brought together all of the unique individuals and partnerships that have supported Embrace along the way. Embrace has been transformed from vision to life and all those who have connected with Embrace have been transformed from life as usual to rethinking life.

²¹ Wes Olds, “History of Epworth Church,” interview by author, February 02, 2014. Wes Olds was the restart pastor of The Rock/La Roca.

²² “Synergy About Our Definitions: All Forms of a Word (noun, Verb, Etc.) Are Now Displayed on One Page,” Merriam-Webster, accessed August 14, 2013, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/synergy>.

The team and I found that the data collected from Claritas was reliable in helping us understand the culture, the different pockets of population, and what areas different people groups like to frequent. Outreach starts to become more of a possibility after reviewing such information and understanding the people you are trying to serve. This is exactly what Rick Warren did when he planted Saddleback Church in California, with his “Saddleback Sam” description:

Saddleback Sam is the typical unchurched man who lives in our area. His age is late thirties or early forties. He has a college degree and may have an advanced degree. (The Saddleback Valley has one of the highest household education levels in America.) He is married to Saddleback Samantha, and they have two kids, Steve and Sally.

Surveys show that Sam likes his job, he likes where he lives, and he thinks he’s enjoying life now more than he was five years ago. He’s self-satisfied, even smug, about his station in life. He’s either a professional, a manager, or a successful entrepreneur. Sam is among the most affluent Americans, but he carries a lot of debt, especially due to the price of his home.²³

On the other hand, I did not have a specific group I was trying reach. I was trying to hit any moving target I could find. Warren had a clear person in mind when he was planting Saddleback. Warren’s concept of targeting a specific group was not something new but something that was inspired by the ideology of church growth theorist Donald McGavern.

²³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 169.

Outreach Theories

Many scholars consider Donald McGavran as the “father of the modern church growth movement” through his development of the homogenous unit principle. McGavran defines a homogeneous unit as a “section of society in which all the members have something in common.”²⁴ McGavran first introduced the homogeneous unit principle in the 1970 original version of *Understanding Church Growth*. The rationale behind the homogeneous unit principle is that people movements are an effective mode of evangelism. McGavran furthers his theory by explaining, “Men and women like to become Christians without crossing linguistic, racial, and class lines.”²⁵ It is true that as human beings we generally like to stay in our comfort zones. This reality is seen within the segregation of cities and even churches across America. The tendency is to be around people with whom we identify, whether it is by ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, or even gender. However, the goal should be moving past similarities to bridge the gap. The kingdom of God is about crossing barriers and uniting people through the cross of Christ. I believe the Apostle Paul succinctly communicates this in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”

²⁴ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 136.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.

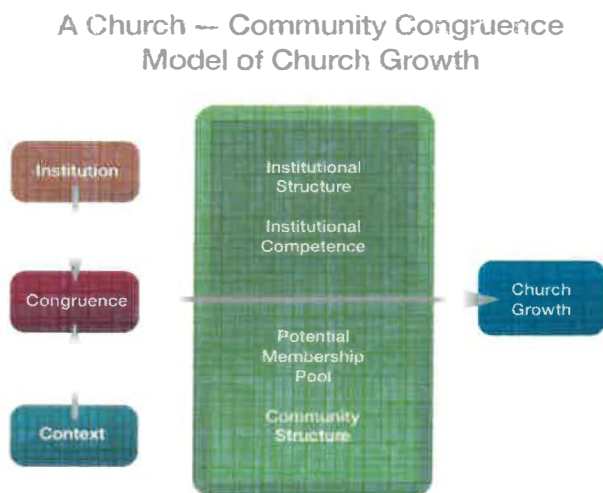
In church planting, the homogenous unit principle is often a reality, especially when starting. The planter is going to attract people who are like him or her. For example, my initial experience with Embrace was surrounding myself with folks in their early-to-mid-twenties who were mostly single. We were becoming very comfortable in our setting until God started to rock our world by bringing in groups of people from all different backgrounds as he drew us into the heart of Downtown Lexington. The early pioneers of Embrace and I were doing outreach by inviting people into our weekly gatherings. One of the people we invited was a homeless man who showed up for a dinner. At first, I think some of us were taken aback. It becomes easy, even within a small group of people, to gravitate toward folks who make us feel comfortable. I noticed this as our friend came for dinner. Not many people were talking to him. His clothes were worn and had a slight odor. His hair was greasy and his eyes were tired, probably from sleeping outside. He talked to himself a bit when others were not talking to him, and he even pulled out a book and would read it out loud to himself. I noticed that not many people were talking with him, so I sat with him that first evening at my house gathering. As I talked with him and learned his story, I could see barriers coming down. By the end of the night, many of the folks introduced themselves to him and made him feel welcome. John has been attending Embrace now for five years, going back to these early days in my home. John is among the most marginalized of society: a homeless gay man with a mental illness. I believe John helped “prepare the way” in Embrace’s early history to

make it a church that offered friendship to all who walked through its doors. Embrace quickly gained the reputation around town as being a faith community for the homeless.

I believe God used people like John at the start of Embrace to move us from only reaching out to people who were like us to reaching all of those in our city. Embrace started to reflect what the center of the city of Lexington looked like. Embrace was becoming congruent with the surrounding community. Missiologist David Britt defines congruency as follows (and as seen in figure 1):

[Congruency is a principle that] is based on the idea that a church will grow as the values of the church and the values of the community interact and combine into something new. As the community changes, the new values fit into interaction, thus allowing the church to adapt to the new community and continue growing so its message and worship will remain relevant.²⁶

Figure 1.



Congruency is not necessarily a new model, but something that has been neglected for some time. The failure to recognize a change in culture and surrounding communities has

²⁶ Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, & the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 331.

meant the death spiral for many churches. Congruency ensures that churches have a pulse on what exactly is going on in the culture in their own communities.

It was challenging for Embrace to move toward congruency. It meant breaking all types of barriers to build relationships with people. Homogeneity is often more comfortable because you do not have to bridge gaps and associate yourself with people who are different culturally, but homogeneity was not God's call for Embrace. The shift Embrace was making from homogeneity to community congruence was not easy. It was actually quite messy. As people came together, they did not speak the same cultural language or possess a like-minded worldview. However, it was extremely rewarding as we saw glimpses of God's kingdom coming to earth. I believe an important set of questions church planters and Christians in general need to ask is: What type of people make us feel uncomfortable and why? What are our biases and prejudices? And, who are "those people" in our mind? I have seen instances where the moment we become honest with God and ourselves we open the door of possibility to embodying a ministry of reconciliation making what seems impossible a reality.

Accomplishments

I believe God brought the Embrace Church family and me into this merger for a number of reasons. First, Embrace would continue to remain debt free by absorbing a property and building that are worth more than a million dollars in a neighborhood that was being revitalized. They have been able to establish a coffee shop for hospitality, redo

the chapel, and take care of many cosmetic repairs to the physical building. The space has been more of an attraction for families with children that Embrace Church's Kentucky Theatre Campus could not retain.

In addition to new families joining the church, some people who previously left The Rock/La Roca have since come back. The experience has been one of healing for those who may have been hurt when they left and one of excitement for the older parishioners to be around young families with children.

Second, I have an established relationship with the members of The Rock/La Roca from my five-year tenure at the church as a volunteer and then a custodian turned associate pastor. Consequently, this has been an opportunity to rekindle a lot of meaningful relationships. This has also helped me recruit godly leaders in organizing a leadership team with equal representation from both campuses. Quickly, many of the faithful members have been reassured by my presence and have regained confidence in the security of the church's future because of familiarity with my work ethic and my humble beginnings.

Third, I would be able to support friends, John and Laura Gallaher, who started the youth ministry at the church again. Through their experience in working with the youth, the Gallahers saw a need to go deeper than an ordinary youth ministry, particularly in serving the children and youth from broken families. Through prayer and discernment they launched Common Good, which is a Christian Community Development Association that ministers to children, youth, and their families in a holistic way through

spiritual formation, leadership development, education, and recreation. The program is physically located at the Epworth Campus near where many of the kids and their families live. As Common Good grows, there is great opportunity to plug the kids and their families into the life of the church. This is especially true since the highest population in the neighborhood consists of those ages five to thirteen,²⁷ and this age group is projected to increase by 11.2% by 2016.²⁷ Currently, the church's Wednesday night youth and children's program has about thirty kids attending weekly. This is significant in that prior to the merger, Embrace Church had little to no family programs.

Fourth, God has begun to stir in me the possibility of generating revenue by using the physical church building at the Epworth Campus as an asset instead of a liability to help fund the ministries. The church has started leasing affordable space to local rock bands to practice their music and hold concerts. This brings in extra money for the church and is a good tool in witnessing to the community through hospitality. In addition, the vision of a daycare center is being considered since the church's first floor would qualify for it. A daycare center would meet the needs of young families and possibly generate additional revenue to help grow Embrace. Embrace Church has also witnessed The Gathering services grow over the past year with leaders and volunteers emerging from both campuses, and especially the Kentucky Theater Campus.

I do not believe it to be coincidental that my passion for urban ministry and the marginalized actually started at The Rock/La Roca with The Gathering's food, clothing, and meal services. I am now full-circle of where I started in 2003. The Gathering has

²⁷ *Church Demographics From MissionInsite*, report, 40505 North Limestone St., accessed February 07, 2012, <http://www.missioninsite.com/>.

been a tremendous blessing to the church's community as yet another outlet for service for our parishioners, particularly from the Downtown Campus.

Finally, at Embrace Church, we are training young people who feel called into ministry as a vocation. As an alumnus, I have cultivated a relationship with Asbury Theological Seminary. We have begun a joint venture in which Asbury students can spend a semester interning at Embrace Church in order to gain practical ministry experience.

The downtown Kentucky Theatre Campus continues to attract new people, but has an overall retention problem and has lost momentum due to giving up its critical mass to send families over to the Epworth Campus. The majority of givers at The Epworth Campus are over the age of sixty-five, and many of them prefer traditional worship and do not want to give up this preference in order to reach out to a younger generation. The Gathering service is ministering to those who are in constant need but requires a leader who can come alongside the ministry to take it to the next level with numerical growth and fundraising. The overarching problem is for Embrace Church to reach a level of sustainability and continued future growth.

Challenges and Opportunities

In both downtown and on the north side of Lexington, there have been city plans for revitalization to attract more people into these areas. Several new businesses are opening downtown. This is especially true on the north side of Lexington as

gentrification is taking place and entrepreneurs are moving into the area. Younger families are moving into inexpensive housing. These families are making renovations to their homes and sending their children to the public schools. There are three main figures contributing to this revitalization of the north side of Lexington: Marty Clifford, Griffin Van Meter, and Les Miller. Marty Clifford has bought multiple housing units along with storefronts, which he has renovated and then added to the local economy. Clifford has been known to pay for neighborhood children to go swimming at Castlewood Park. Clifford's recent storefront properties house a new hair salon, a furniture store, and a creative space for local artists to collaborate and display their talent to the community. After Clifford became the first pioneer, another person with a similar heart moved into the north side of Lexington, Griffin Van Meter. Van Meter is described in a local Lexington magazine, *Skirt!*:

At the intersection of art, food, and culture in Lexington, you'll find Griffin, an eclectic, witty and one-of-a-kind fixture in his adopted North Limestone neighborhood. A preservationist and

entrepreneur, the 28-year-old is invested both financially and emotionally in the area. "Just from living down there, you start meeting people who really care about the neighborhood, then you start to care about the neighborhood." A partner in the popular Stella's Kentucky Deli on Jefferson Street, Al's Bar at 6th and Limestone and several other properties, Griffin works through his partnerships - with business associates, neighborhood associations and the city - to revitalize downtown, particularly the Limestone-Loudon corridor, while preserving the integrity and history of the area. A catalyst for culture, he organizes neighborhood happenings and fosters development of businesses that are culturally engaged. "It's revitalization through food and music, because the enjoyment

of food and music is the common denominator that brings people together."²⁸

One of Van Meter's associates in the local businesses of Stella's Kentucky Deli and Al's Bar has been Les Miller. Miller, too, has fixed up some of the local shops in the area, creating a space for a new venture behind Al's Bar, Broke Spoke Community Bicycle Shop. Broke Spoke services the "invisible cyclists," which are growing at a rapid rate in Lexington. They are seeking to bring more awareness to the bike community by supplying an inexpensive alternative to bike repair, education, and creative ways to seek payment from customers for volunteering their time in exchange for payment.²⁹

Embrace Church has a unique opportunity to reach a community of people who are ready for change and revitalization. The context of the community will provide a backdrop for how Embrace Church can implement a plan to carry out its mission. It is crucial for Embrace Church to understand the people who make up the demographical statistical populations of Lexington. There are many opportunities for ministries in Lexington, and the potential for what God can do to help Embrace Church reach its God-given potential while carrying out the synergy between its three dynamic communities.

²⁸ Kelli Patrick, "Griffin VanMeter | Urban Ninja," Lexington, December 1, 2008, Summary, accessed February 17, 2012, http://lexington.skirt.com/he's_so_original/griffin-vanmeter-urban-ninja.

²⁹ Tom Eblen, "Kentucky.com," Kentucky.com, January 10, 2011, Summary, accessed February 21, 2012, <http://www.kentucky.com/2010/11/10/1518338/tom-eblen-this-bike-shops-clientele.html>.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Throughout scripture, there seems to be precedence for bi-vocational ministry. Two of many scriptural examples will be examined here. The Old Testament figures that will be examined are the prophet Amos and Nehemiah, and the New Testament figure is the Apostle Paul. My intent is to first explore the social context in which they both lived and how God used them through their specialized bi-vocational ministries.

Old Testament

Amos

For one to understand Amos, the man and the prophet, one must understand the complexity of the historical context, and setting of Israel in the eighth century B.C. The historical markers of Amos's prophetic ministry were between the reigns of Judah's King Uzziah (783 -742 B.C.) and Israel's King Jeroboam (786 – 746 B.C.). Amos 1:1 indicates that Amos came on the scene "two years before the earthquake" that caused great desolation. Unlike Jeremiah and Hosea's prophetic ministries that extended over decades, Amos' lasted only a few months. In addition to a short tenure, Amos had the challenge of traveling outside his comfort zone as a citizen of the southern kingdom of Judah to Israel,

the northern kingdom. He spoke out against the coveted calf idols the Israelites were worshipping at Gilgal, Dan, and Bethel. Like the prophets of old, Amos found himself calling Israel back to honor the covenant they made with Yahweh, and to repentance. At the point of Amos' prophetic tenure, Israel had backslidden into idolatry, sexual immorality and oppressing those in poverty.¹

There is a uniqueness found in Amos that sets him apart from his prophetic predecessors. It is not the fiery prophetic message that echoes some of the post-exilic prophets, but instead he is distinguished by how he characterized himself. At the start of his writing, he identifies himself as, according to Amos 1:1, "among the shepherds of Tekoa."² As a shepherd, and/or herdsman, Amos would have been on the low end of the social totem pole. During the eighth century B.C., shepherds were in the lower echelons of society, and often despised. Amos would have simply been viewed as an uneducated, illiterate, blue-collar farmhand.³ Amos 7:14-15 further drives this point: "I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. But the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"⁴

¹ 4347-4357. Hays, J. Daniel and Tremper Longman. "Overview of Amos." In *Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic and Apocalyptic Books of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), Kindle edition.

² Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version.

³ John Blanchard, "Amos," in *Major Points from the Minor Prophets* (EP Books, 2012), Kindle edition.

⁴ "Amos 7:14-15," in *The Holy Bible: ESV, English Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments*. (New York: American Bible Society, 2001), accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.biblegateway.com>.

A pertinent question would then be how did Amos support himself while living in a foreign land in order that he might deliver his radical message? The scholar Daniel Hays suggests that Amos was not just a simple shepherd, but rather that he owned an extensive flock that helped support his ministry.⁵ It is impossible to determine whether Amos had wealth, and quite frankly wealth is irrelevant to this issue. Through his vocation as a shepherd, Amos is used by God to identify with the oppressed and to speak against their oppressors. Amos spoke on behalf of people who were being oppressed economically.⁶

Amos was not demeaning his own prophetic calling when he said to the priest Amaziah that he was “not a prophet, or...the son of a prophet.” On the contrary, he was affirming it, for he did not ask for it, but it was Yahweh that took him from his flock. Amos looked at himself in a humble way, as a simple herdsman and fig farmer who performed in a blue-collar occupation, not as a prophet dependent on a prophetic organization where he received mentoring from an elder prophet. Instead, he set himself apart from the comfort of any organized guild of prophets. The fact that Amos earned his own livelihood as a herdsman and fig farmer afforded him the advantage of speaking the words Yahweh put in his mouth, instead of giving in to the pressures of fearing those he

⁵ Ibid., 4384-4390.

⁶ Terry Giles, "A Note on the Vocation of Amos in 7:14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 691, accessed September/October, 2012, Old Testament Abstracts, EBSCOhost.

would offend. As the scholar Fred Wood puts it, Amos was giving his “declaration of independence,” in which he spoke boldly against the injustices of his day.⁷

The fact that Amos' occupation is disclosed separates him from the Old Testament's sixteen writing prophets. Amos is only concerned about the burning message given to him from Yahweh, and is less concerned about the manner in which it is received by Amaziah and Israel. Since his sustenance is coming from his occupation, he is not easily persuaded by others and is able to defend his call as a prophet with boldness. Old Testament Scholar John Thomas Finley supports the conclusion that Amos was a bi-vocational prophet:

When Amos goes on to state his occupation, he apparently replies directly to Amaziah's implication that prophecy is the source of his food. In other words, Amos denies that he makes a living from prophecy, or at least that material gain in any way motivates his actions. Right now he is not making his living through the office of a prophet. The contrast can be brought out better, in my view, by the present tense translation: I am not (nor have I ever been) a prophet (by profession).⁸

Amos' function as a bi-vocational prophet would have been something foreign to those who were accustomed to the paid religious professionals. In Israel's religious setting, the priests were viewed primarily as tending the shrine at Beth-El. They were adhering to these religious practices and protocols when Amos entered the scene as a type of a lay

⁷ Fred Wood, "Clash Between Amaziah and Amos (vv. 10-17)," in *Amos*, Minor Prophets Series (Bloomington: Cross Books, 2009), 121.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 257.

missionary prophet, who had traveled to a land that was foreign to him. They would have viewed Amos as a lower status laborer with no religious training.⁹

Amaziah was threatened by Amos's prophecy, not only because of his own priestly role, but also because he was trying to protect the interests of King Jeroboam II. Amos' prophecy would have been understood as a form of betrayal and a threat to Israel.¹⁰ In the prior prophetic contexts with which Amaziah was perhaps familiar, a prophet was more than a proclaimer of Yahweh. He or she also functioned in several roles required by the monarchy. For example, 1 Kings 22 states that four hundred prophets advised King Jehoshaphat. It was common for prophets to give guidance on warfare and alliances, as they worked in an advisory role for the king. Also, Amos lacked the type of formal association prophets such as Elijah and Elisha had. (2 Kings 2) Amos was a loner who lacked association with any professional guilds, communities, or mentorships.¹¹

Amos did not deny being a messenger of Yahweh as much as he denied following the call for self-benefit and the perks that would come from being a prophet in this religious context. Amaziah probably thought that Amos left his small town area in Judah to come to the “big city” in order to make more money as a prophet. Amos may

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Couey John. Blake, "Amos Vii 10-17 and Royal Attitudes towards Prophecy in the Ancient Near East.," *Vetus Testamentum*, no. 58 (2008): pg. 314, accessed September 13, 2012, Old Testament Abstracts, EBSCOhost.

¹¹ Daniel J. Simundson, "Amos and Amaziah," in *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), accessed September 13, 2012, www.sermons.com.

very well have been trying to imply another connection when he said: “But the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’” (Amos 7:15) This can be seen as a connection to another Old Testament figure that was taken from “the flock” as a shepherd boy, David. Amos was delivering not only the message of Yahweh, but was suggesting that more important than his message was the one who had called him to do it. He was suggesting that God could call the least likely, most unexpected people and use them to transform the culture. Like David, Amos was called to honor Yahweh as King over all of Israel. Amos was called to prophesy to both Israel and Judah, because they were both God’s people.¹²

The Greco-Roman philosopher Dio Chrysostom believed that Amos 7:14-15 exhibited Amos’ humility in how his calling and prophecy were not something he conjured up on his own or for personal gain. Amos’ self-effacing of his prophetic ministry was designed to halt the accusations of Amaziah. Pope Gregory the Great pointed out that as one’s service to God increases to a higher level, so should one’s level of humility. It was in relation to this that he characterized Amos. Gregory believed it was the work of the Holy Spirit that enabled Amos’ humility. The Spirit also called servants like David, Daniel, Peter, Paul, and Matthew from their sole occupational focus to dual roles in serving God with a Kingdom-focused vocation. Gregory summarizes it succinctly when he said “The Spirit changes the human heart in a moment, filling it with light. Suddenly we are no longer what we were; suddenly we are something we never used to

¹² David Allan. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Douglas Stuart, *Word Biblical Commentary: Hosea-Jonah*, vol. 31 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 377.

be.”¹³ Even the great reformer, John Calvin, suggested that Amos was not privileged in the respect that other prophets of old were, because of his lack of any type of prophetic instructional training in the law.¹⁴

Nehemiah

Amos’ prophetic call and story is set in the context of humble beginnings as a herdsman and fig farmer. However, it is important to acknowledge that God calls many of the Old Testament figures and prophets from a variety of settings. The story of Nehemiah is one that is set in quite different circumstances than Amos. Nehemiah’s story opens up in the lavish courts of Persia instead of farm fields.¹⁵ The background leading up to the book of Nehemiah finds Jerusalem in a desolate state as the Babylonian soldiers routed the city, burned the buildings, tore down the temple leaving only the poorest of Jerusalem’s’ people left to pick up the pieces. The Babylonian captivity took the top citizens as deportees to this foreign land, which fulfilled the weeping prophet, Jeremiah’s words of destruction. The morale of the people was at a all-time low because of what they witnessed but even more so because they walked in such a long road of disobedience

¹³ Alberto Ferreiro and Thomas C. Oden, "Amos 7:1-17," in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: The Twelve Prophets*, vol. XIV, Old Testament (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 109-110.

¹⁴ Calvin John, "Commentary on Amos, Part 16," Sion's Jewish Instruction Pages, accessed October 02, 2012(<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/m.sion/cvams-16.htm>).

¹⁵ Raymond Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah: God's Servant in a Time of Change* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 13.

in worshipping false gods and idols while forsaking their first love, Yahweh.¹⁶ After a long seventy years of exile with such prophets as Ezekiel and Daniel bringing a message of hope in a pagan land, the Israelite people would bravely return to their homeland to start over again. As they returned, God would raise up prophetic voices along the way to help them trust Yahweh. The voices of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were used to sharpen the people, as their confidence would build with each passing day. The rebuilding of the temple was strategized under God's leading with Zerubbabel and Ezra who would preach God's Word. Momentum and excitement were building up as God rose up a resourceful leader in Nehemiah to rebuild the broken walls.¹⁷

Nehemiah's story is set in the mid-fifth century BC where he worked in Susa, in the palace of the Persian king Artaxerxes, which ironically was the same setting where the stories of Daniel and Esther took place. Some Old Testament scholars believe the year Nehemiah came on the scene was around 445 BC, which was plausibly thirteen years following Ezra.¹⁸ Old Testament Scholar, B. W. Anderson believes that Nehemiah's accounts are "one of the most trustworthy sources of Jewish history in the Persian period."¹⁹ The reading of Nehemiah brings an autobiographical sketch that is

¹⁶ Raymond Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah: God's Servant in a Time of Change* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 13.

¹⁷ Ibid., 14.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Living World of the Old Testament* (Harlow, England: Longman, 1988), 513.

rarely common in the Old Testament and parallels the accounts in Ezra and Chronicles as well.

Nehemiah is considered one of the great Old Testament figures who displayed extraordinary leadership skills as he led the Israelite people who had been previously scarred from exile and uncertain about themselves without a Davidic king. Nehemiah was not a king, prophet, nor priest, but led in such a manner with characteristics resembling all three roles with his innovation for building projects, repopulating the city, and spiritual reawakening.²⁰

Though Old Testament scholars do not view Nehemiah as a prophet in a traditional sense, Nehemiah does function with prophetic qualities when it comes to his calling in Jerusalem (2:12, 17-18), his declaration on behalf of God to the people, his boldness in the face of opposition and oppressiveness (5:13), and his persecution from false prophets (6:10-14). Nehemiah is not priestly like the Levitical priest; however, he participates in spiritual renewal and promotes holiness through prayer, witness, and worship as he leads the people in intercession before God (8:9-12; 9:38-10:1; 12:38). Nehemiah also functions similarly to past Davidic kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah who led religious reforms and building projects/expansions of the temple. God rose Nehemiah up in his time to function in many different roles in order to remind the Israelites of God's love and mercy.²¹

²⁰ Raymond Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah: God's Servant in a Time of Change* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 16.

²¹ Ibid., 17.

Nehemiah's story is impressive. As a driven, godly leader, it is important to note that in the opening narrative Nehemiah's prime motivation is to be a 'servant' of God.

The noun 'servant' is repeated at the beginning of the memoir in Nehemiah 1:6-11.

6 Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your *servant* that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even me and my father's house have sinned. **7** We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. **8** Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, **9** but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' **10** They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. **11** O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your *servant*, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your *servant* today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Nehemiah's highest aspiration is to serve God in whatever capacity necessary. It is important to note that many of the Old Testament figures who are used by God in mighty ways are humble and have an attitude of a servant. After all, this is the *modus operandi* of Jesus Christ who said in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Also, it is important to understand that Nehemiah was born in Persia. The tales of Jerusalem being destroyed by the Babylonians were undoubtedly shared with Nehemiah as he was growing up away from the distant land of Jerusalem. In Ezra 4:6-23, there is

an understanding that any attempts to rebuild Jerusalem's walls that were in ruins would face major opposition. As a "servant of King Artaxerxes, [Nehemiah is] aware from court news that one innocent attempt to rebuild Jerusalem's walls [has] been dramatically frustrated. At [this] time, local opponents [have] written to the Persian king asserting that Jerusalem's citizens [are] intent on rebellion and, on the king's orders, work on the walls [is] brought to an abrupt end."²² Even Nehemiah's contemporary Ezra has opposition as the second round of exiles are returning to their homeland.

Nehemiah's deep concern is the exiles returning to their homeland and also rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The task in front of him is challenging and seems impossible to many. Nevertheless, Nehemiah accepts God's call to carry out the task even though his position is cupbearer for King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah functions more as a bi-vocational minister because his "day job" is working for the king, but his call is to rebuild the wall and people.

Nehemiah's day job as a cupbearer for King Artaxerxes is a well-respected position according to a contemporary Greek historian, Herodotus. "The wine steward [is] a man of recognized dignity in court circles, entirely trustworthy, the king's confidant, and next in rank of princes."²³ Other ancient sources share the importance of a cupbearer as well. "In Tobit, it is said that Esarhaddon's cupbearer [is] second only to him in his kingdom" (Tobit 1:22). In the History of Herodotus (iii.34), it states that "Cambyses

²² Raymond Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah: God's Servant in a Time of Change* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 31.

²³ Ibid., 41.

[does] one of his friends a favor by appointing his son as cupbearer.”²⁴ It is also worth noting that some scholars believe Nehemiah was a eunuch. Eunuchs commonly served as officials to the king because of the contact they would have with his harem.²⁵ It is clear Nehemiah has not received his position as cupbearer haphazardly but as a testament to his character and integrity. Though Nehemiah is in close proximity to the king, it is important to understand that near-eastern monarchs are recognized as almost divine-like figures who would leave the people trembling in respect.²⁶ Nehemiah takes his service to God so seriously that he wants to be the best cupbearer he can be to honor the king as a part of his service to God. In Nehemiah 1:11b he records, “Now I was a cupbearer to the King.” The Hebrew literally translates it as “now I [am] in charge of the wine.”²⁷ When wine is placed in front of the King, it is the cupbearer’s job to drink out of it first to make sure it is not poisoned.²⁸ Nehemiah would literally put his life on the line many occasions to serve the King. It is a common occurrence for the wealthy enemies of a king to try and poison him through bribery of a cupbearer. The cupbearer has to first sample the wine

²⁴ 2117-2118. F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), Kindle edition.

²⁵ Ibid., 2119-2123.

²⁶ Raymond Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah: God's Servant in a Time of Change* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 41.

²⁷ 2138-2140. F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), Kindle edition.

²⁸ Ibid.

before the king by pouring into his hands. Constant attempts to poison a King would leave the person suspicious and paranoid.²⁹

Nehemiah's role as a cupbearer is stressed again in 2:1a, "In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine [is] before him, I [take] up the wine and [give] it to the king." Scholars speculate that Nehemiah waits for the ideal time to ask for his appeal during a festival when there is massive celebration throughout the land. One Greek historian explains that "no one who [asks] a boon that day at the king's board [shall be denied his request]."³⁰ Most likely, Nehemiah waits four-months to make the big ask waiting for the ideal opportunity, which is why he looks miserable as everybody else is rejoicing for the new year.³¹

2 And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. **3** I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" **4** Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. **5** And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it." **6** And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. **7** And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, **8** and a letter to Asaph, the

²⁹ 1451. Mark A. Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992), Kindle edition.

³⁰ Raymond Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah: God's Servant in a Time of Change* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 45.

³¹ Ibid.

keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy.” And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.³²

Based on dialogue between Nehemiah and King Artaxerxes, it is obvious that Nehemiah uses the four months of silence to methodically prepare and plan what he is going to ask for and say when it comes to rebuilding the gates, walls and other parts according to verses 7-8. Even though the King grants Nehemiah’s request, Nehemiah takes time to thank God. Over the course of the book, the reader can see the ups and downs a cupbearer turned builder has in leading God’s people to rebuilding Jerusalem.

Nehemiah and Amos are great examples of biblical leaders who have two totally different backgrounds and contexts but are still able to have dual vocations in their service to God. Nehemiah rubs shoulders with royalty and is in a palace in his service to God, and Amos is a herdsman and farmer of sycamore figs. Both carry out a service to God as a primary vocation while having a “day job” as well.

New Testament

The Apostle Paul

The New Testament’s most famous bi-vocational minister is the Apostle Paul. In fact, Paul’s occupation as a “tent-maker” was the genesis for what has been commonly known as “tentmaking” in reference to those functioning as bi-vocational ministers. The

³² Nehemiah 2:2-8

biblical passage disclosing Paul's occupation is Acts 18:1-4, which states, "After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks." Paul, as a tent-maker, would not have been too uncommon in the first century religious context, for rabbis would often have to support them apart from the religious institution. Paul was falling in line with the rabbinical custom of combining one's study of the Torah with a marketable trade such as tent making.³³ Rabbi Judah says, "He that teaches not his son a trade is as if he taught him to be a thief." An unknown rabbi says, "He that has a trade in his hand is as a vineyard that is fenced."³⁴ This can easily explain Paul's affirming attitude of hard work when it came to the study of Scripture, along with working his physical body in a trade.

Jewish Rabbis were not the only ones who had dual roles, for outside of the Jewish religious context were Greco-Roman philosophers like Dio Chrysostom, who would charge fees and work in other occupations to make a living.³⁵ In fact, it was common for philosophers to use their workshops as environments for "intellectual

³³ Ibid., 11.

³⁴ Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Ac 18:1-6). Peabody: Hendrickson.

³⁵ Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980), 67.

activity.” There, students would be lectured to, and people would engage in conversation. Such was the case with Simon the shoemaker, for the Cynic tradition suggests that Simon held philosophical conversations in his workshop with the likes of Pericles, Socrates and other intellectuals. The key virtue Cynics held was that of being self-sufficient, which is exactly what allowed Simon to have a trade that could support his philosophical, Socratic-Cynic teaching.³⁶

The Apostle Paul was not merely functioning as a tent-maker prior to his conversion, but was even doing so during his ministry to the Gentiles. The actual translation of Paul’s trade was leather working, as indicated by the word when he is often referred to as “tentmaker” σκηνοποιός (*skenopoios*).³⁷ The New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce suggests: “This trade was closely connected with the principal product of Paul’s native province, a cloth of goats’ hair called cilicium, used for cloaks, curtains, and other fabrics designed to give protection against wet.”³⁸ Bruce seems to get it partially right, but does not give a full explanation of the Greek word, *skenopoios*. *Skenopoios* in the most basic sense describes one who makes tents. But, the other nuances associated with *skenopoios* give the wider sense of one who works with leather, canvas, and linens. The

³⁶ Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980), 39.

³⁷ 306. Terry W. Dorsett, *Developing Leadership Teams in the Bi-vocational Church* (Bloomington: CrossBooks, 2010), Kindle edition.

³⁸ Bruce, F. F. "Acts 18." In *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 346.

word *skenopoios* is referred to as a *hapax legomenon*, because there are no other New Testament passages containing the same word.³⁹

The Early Church Fathers weighed in on the discussion of Paul's trade by offering different interpretations of *skenopoios*. Gregory of Nyssa translated this in his own way by giving the title, "stitcher of tents" to Paul. While Rufinus, Theodoret, and Chrysostom refer to Paul as a "shoemaker."⁴⁰ Origen translates *skenopoios* in what later became the accepted sense of tent-maker. Also, Origen classically gives an allegorical image that compares how Peter, Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee were transformed from being fishermen to "fishers of people," and it is in this same way that Paul's occupation was transformed to tent-maker. Prior to Paul's conversion, Origen believed he was building merely physical tents. However, post-conversion, Paul was building tents much like the ones Israel would use in the desert to contain Yahweh's presence. This was synonymous with Paul's passion for planting congregations.⁴¹

Regardless, the point is made that the Apostle Paul worked with his hands, and most tents in Paul's setting were made of leather. Although a tent-maker, Paul would not have been limited to that professional specialty alone; he would have made other products from his overall training with leather working. If so, Paul would have gone

³⁹ 441. Marie Noël. Keller, "Luke's Narration," in *Priscilla and Aquila: Paul's Coworkers in Christ Jesus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), Kindle edition.

⁴⁰ Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 20-21.

⁴¹ Francis Martin and Thomas C. Oden, *Acts*, vol. 5, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 224-225.

through in-depth training as a young boy, starting as an apprentice around the age of thirteen under his father. The training would have been for an intense time period of two or three years, with the hope he would become impeccable at his trade by the age of fifteen or sixteen.⁴² There is the likelihood that the tents and leather items that he made would have been of such great importance to the Roman army that it would have afforded Paul and his family dual citizenship.⁴³ The art of tent making would have afforded Paul the opportunity to perform his trade as a missionary, affording him the opportunity to be able to carry his own portable tools with him on his travels. His tools would have included a variety of knives and awls that could be used to cut and sew leather. His essential toolkit allowed him to travel freely on his missionary journeys. It is this that would have allowed Paul's social life to expand, allowing him to have interactions with many different people who were both Jewish and Gentile as he labored in his workshop.⁴⁴

It is not a coincidence that Paul met his two key ministry partners in Corinth, where they too were practicing the trade of tent making. Paul's connections with Priscilla and Aquila were pivotal in their business together, and it also provided Paul with a hospitable home in which to stay. Acts 18:1-4 suggests that during the week Paul was working as a tentmaking laborer, and on the weekends he was preaching in the

⁴² Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 24.

⁴³ Ben Witherington, "1 Thessalonians 2:9," in *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 38.

⁴⁴ Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 25.

synagogues.⁴⁵ What he was doing as a first century Christian was no different than some of the Jews of influence in his social context. Take Paul's rabbinic teacher, Hillel, for instance. His occupation was woodcutting, and even Shammai, who was Hillel's rival, worked as a carpenter.⁴⁶

One may wonder why and how this is pertinent to Paul's tent making. There is a strong likelihood that Paul used his workshop in much the same way, that is to say for entering into conversations with his co-workers and customers about the Gospel, in order to win people for Christ.⁴⁷ When Chrysostom reflects on Paul's tent making, he says, "for being raised as an unceasing worker is the nature of philosophy."⁴⁸ Chrysostom has possibly offered some corrective here, in that he points out that those who are wise and intellectual were not necessarily the ones born in privileged families, but those that could toil with sweat beading down their brows.

A. Deissman, a late eighteenth century German theologian, held a unique view within New Testament scholarship regarding Paul and his occupation as a tent-maker. Deissman was so intrigued with Paul's tentmaking occupation that he believed that even some of Paul's letters were probably written from his workshop. Like the prophet Amos, Deissman believed that Paul easily identified himself with those who were of lower class

⁴⁵ Dorsett, *Developing Leadership Teams in the Bi-vocational Church* (Bloomington: CrossBooks, 2010), 320.

⁴⁶ Vincent, M. R., *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), Acts 18:3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁸ Francis Martin and Thomas C. Oden, *Acts*, vol. 5, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 223.

and in poverty.⁴⁹ Paul's long hours on the job probably did not equate to a large salary. If we imagined Paul as living in today's North American context, we might say that his money went to pay for rent, food, and clothing, and there still may have been times in his life in which he could not make ends meet.⁵⁰

Other noted scriptural evidence of Paul's bi-vocational status is found in his first and second letters to the Thessalonians. First Thessalonians 2:9 states, "For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God." Paul's work came to be known for the Thessalonians as a model for them to imitate, which fueled his working "night and day." Paul indicates the reason for this work by saying that he does not want to be a "burden" to them.⁵¹

Another passage that highlights Paul's bi-vocational ministry elucidates a few different reasons why he worked as a tent-maker. Paul states in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10, "For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For

⁴⁹ Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 14.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁵¹ 5949. Gordon D. Fee, "First Word for the Disruptive-Idle: Imitate Paul (3:7-10)," in *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), Kindle edition.

even when we were with you, this we commanded you, ‘If any will not work, neither let him eat.’” Perhaps, another reason was to have a teaching moment with his Gentile converts, who may not have had a strong work ethic or could have even looked down on people who had to support themselves through manual labor. This is further evidenced in 2 Thessalonians 4:11, where Paul says, “...work with your hands, as we instructed you.” A common theme for these converts appears to be idleness by these converts.⁵² Paul’s occupation allowed him to be viewed as a diligent worker in his social context, which his converts could emulate. Richard Hocks states it well when he says, “...by placing Paul in the workshop—that is, by taking seriously the fact that Paul was a tentmaker—we have located him more precisely in the social and intellectual milieu of the urban center of the Greek East of the early empire.”⁵³ To view Paul as a theologian who only spent his time in synagogues is to get a blurred look, because it does not take seriously who he was within his social context.

Paul’s Roman Citizenship Combined with His Tentmaking

It is hard to deny the Apostle Paul’s contribution to early Christianity as the first Christian missionary. The fruits of Paul’s labor are remarkable because of the power of the Holy Spirit in his life and the boldness that he possessed. However, one of the dimensions of Paul that is often neglected or debated is his Roman citizenship. Paul’s Roman citizenship aided him in preaching the Gospel because of the rights that came

⁵² Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 45.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 68.

with it. Paul's rights helped him travel, saved him from death, and protected his converts, which are seen in three separate passages in the book of Acts. Though some may not believe in Paul's Roman citizenship, it is clear that this denial ultimately disrupts the later part of the book of Acts.

Paul's Roman citizenship is referred to three separate times in Acts 16:35-39, 22:22-29, and 25:6-12. These passages for the most part remain undisputed. However, some scholars due to historical evidence doubt Paul's Roman citizenship. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there are some scholars who say that for the purpose of the narrative the issue of citizenship was conjured by the author. This extreme view suggests that around the end of the first century the aim of the author was to exhibit the Gospel's international claims. A rabbinic Jew would not better fit this claim than Paul who is Roman. The early church and the interpretation of Acts come under unique complications due to the sentiments of scholars regarding the Roman citizenship of Paul.⁵⁴

One of the main issues that comes out of dealing with the subject of Paul's Roman citizenship has to do with either the likelihood or the credibleness that during the midpoint of the first century Paul was a Roman citizen despite his social and cultural position as a Jew. Many scholars have voiced before this argument. Regardless of how many occasions this argument has been mentioned, there are those who hold an extreme view that still remains unchanged. The cruciality of Paul's Roman citizenship and its historicity remain untouched, no matter the numerous arguments for the likelihood or the

⁵⁴ 5027. Ben Witherington, *New Testament History: A Narrative Account* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), Kindle edition.

credibleness that Paul was a Roman citizen despite his social and cultural position as a Jew.⁵⁵

The structure to the final part of Acts is affected overall due to the passages regarding Paul's Roman citizenship. In discussing this topic, there must be attention given to the passages in Acts-especially Acts 16:35-39 where Paul's Roman citizenship creates a shift in the narrative regarding Silas' and Paul's own fate.⁵⁶

35 But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." **36** And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." **37** But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." **38** The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. **39** So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city.

As citizens of Roman, Paul and Silas were both free from any type of Jewish form of punishment according to both Porcian and Valerian Laws, which would include crucifixion, beatings with rods, scourging, and other forms of punishment that would have been considered humiliating.⁵⁷ Under the Valerian and Porcian laws a Roman citizen has the right to a fair hearing in the presence of a Roman magistrate but must also

⁵⁵ 846. Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), Kindle edition.

⁵⁶ 5878. Ben Witherington, *New Testament History: A Narrative Account* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), Kindle edition.

⁵⁷ Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 299.

be formally charged, penalized, and accused.⁷ The question arises in this situation as to why did Paul not communicate that he was a Roman citizen before his and Silas' beating? It may be the case that the magistrates were such in an irate state that Paul had no chance to do so.⁵⁸ In verse 39, something interesting occurs where an official apology is demanded by Paul, possibly asked for in hopes of discouraging any persecution that would occur to his new converts. A role reversal of power occurred when Paul accepted the apology after he had been beaten and following the salvation of households in Philippi. Paul realizes that nobody can stifle God's redemptive work of salvation. However, this apology may be out of fear as well because those that were in office would have received stiff penalties as the punishment for directly disregarding the protection given by citizenship.⁵⁹ The magistrates tried to right the wrong that they did because knew that they would be held directly accountable for their actions if it came to the attention of certain persons in positions of authority. "Under the *Lex Julia* on public violence anyone who, while holding *imperium* or office, puts to death or flogs a Roman citizen contrary to his [right of] appeal or orders any of the aforementioned things to be done, or puts [a yoke] on his neck so that he may be captured."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 429.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 52.

Paul and the Roman Tribune

The next passage is from Acts 22:22-29. In this passage, a Roman tribune is going to flog Paul.

22 Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.” **23** And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, **24** the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why they were shouting against him like this. **25** But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” **26** When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.” **27** So the tribune came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” **28** The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.” **29** So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

According to verse 28, the tribune, Claudius Lysias, for his own Roman citizenship, paid a large sum of money. Due to Paul’s response of being a Roman citizen, Claudius Lysias was stricken with fear and had a change of heart toward Paul. Claudius Lysias acted upon Paul’s behalf as reported in Acts 23:26-30 because of Paul’s claim of Roman citizenship. Immediately following Claudius Lysias’s statement of paying for Roman citizenship, Paul speaks of how through parents he has rights to citizenship. Any false claims of citizenship would result in death so a person claiming such status was usually believed. Perhaps, Paul is most likely believed because such a serious claim if false would result in his death. The first century B.C. would have to be the time that dates back to when the

Roman citizenship was granted to this specific Jewish family.⁶¹ Dating back to 171 B.C., it was according to Ramsay that Pompey allowed some Jews who became citizens of Tarsus to also receive Roman citizenship. There is also a later tradition recorded by Jerome that Mark Antony rewarded the parents of Paul with Roman citizenship (who arrived to Tarsus from Gischala) because of a service that was performed for Mark Antony.⁶² By some Paul is viewed as a part of an upper class because of his citizenship and the education that he would have received.¹⁷ Because of this citizenship, scholar William Ramsay said that he “would have placed Paul’s Roman Citizenship was ‘proof that his family was one of distinction and at best moderate wealth.’”⁶³

Paul was accustomed to persecutions under Roman magistrates where he had been beaten with rods three times and under Jewish authority was lashed thirty-nine times on five occasions (2 Corinthians 9:30; 11:24-25; 16:22-24). Through these situations Paul experienced great physical pain, but Paul could have been able to get out of these punishments as well with his rights as a Roman citizen. In these other situations, Paul welcomed the persecution; however, in this particular punishment of flogging Paul claims his rights.⁶⁴ Perhaps the lashing and beatings with rods could not be compared to the

⁶¹ Ibid., 144.

⁶² Ibid., 80.

⁶³ Hock, Ronald F. “Paul’s Tentmaking and The Problem of His Social Class,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978): 557.

⁶⁴ Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 56.

punishment of flogging. Being killed or usually crippled would be the result of such a punishment. Therefore, Paul was facing a possible death that was unjust.

Paul Appeals to the Emperor

Acts 25:6-12 is the third passage concerning the subject of Paul's Roman citizenship.

6 After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. **7** When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not prove. **8** Paul argued in his defense, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense." **9** But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?" **10** But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. **11** If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar." **12** Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go."

Paul is requesting to be turned over to the hands of the emperor in Rome instead of being punished in Jerusalem by his Jewish accusers. The only people who were believed to opt for such a decision as Paul had made was a Roman citizen. Paul's appeal is allowed because the governor had no choice. There was no verdict announced of Paul being guilty. Paul's motivation seemed to be that he would rather take his risk with being under the judgment of the Roman law instead of Jewish authorities where he would not get fair

treatment.⁶⁵ In the latter portions of Acts (26:32 and 28:19) there is reference made to the appeal requested by Paul to the emperor. An appeal to the emperor for a Roman citizen facing a severe penalty was of great consideration because it could place the citizen with a tribunal that was more gracious, an unbiased court, and could ultimately rescue them from punishment that they would likely receive elsewhere.⁶⁶

There is much consideration to be taken that Paul indeed was a Roman citizen. For instance his Greco-Roman rhetoric and display of well-known philosophy such as Stoicism give credence that this was an intelligent person that was familiar with matters outside of the Jewish realm. There are in fact many references to Jews who were Roman citizens prior to the midpoint of the 1st century A.D. As a citizen of Tarsus it was likely for Paul to also be a citizen of Roman giving citizenship to him in a couple of cities. A means of execution for a Roman citizen was beheading, which church tradition records was the means by which Paul was executed by the Roman authorities, validating that Paul indeed was a Roman citizen. Ramsay wrote about how a Roman name was given to every Roman citizen and to adhere to one's legal rights the citizen would have to use their full and proper Roman names that were designated to them. A personal name, a surname, and a family name were the three names that citizens were given. There were only fifteen possible names that would be given for a personal name (*praenomen*), the name of the most relatives was the surname (*nomen* or *gentilicium*) that associated the citizen to them and the individual's name was the family name (*cognomen*). If the three

⁶⁵ Ibid., 183.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 55.

parts of Paul's Roman name were recorded, it would limit the skeptics of his citizenship. However, it must be considered that all three names of any Roman citizen are not recorded in the New Testament anywhere.⁶⁷

Roman Citizenship for the Gospel's Sake

Throughout Paul's writings he nowhere specifically gives mention to his Roman citizenship which seems pointless to some scholars to discuss. However, the accounts in Acts regarding this topic of citizenship should not be neglected. It seems that Paul is hesitant to speak about this citizenship except when it is able to save his life for the sake of spreading the Gospel or to reach a certain destination. Paul had many opportunities to go before the emperor and witness because of the rights of appeal process that he acted upon. Paul tried not to jeopardize his witness among the Jews which perhaps motivated him to keep his Roman citizenship quiet. Roman citizenship to Paul was not the most important thing which would give reason to his leaving out of his writings. Paul wrote as an apostle of Christ, not a Roman citizen. He kept the spotlight on Christ which was exactly what his converts needed to hear. It seems that Paul did not want his title to get in the way of advancing the Gospel. Rather, he wanted the Gospel itself to be the driving force in reaching Jews and Gentiles. Paul used his Roman citizenship not for bragging rights but as a well-crafted tool that would allow him freedom to travel and preach. As an evangelist, Paul would have been able to enter cities in the Roman colony because of the rights he would be able to claim as Roman. As a Roman citizen, there would be honor

⁶⁷ Ibid., 84.

paid to him, as seen in the passages of Acts. With this honor was also an allowance to travel with other citizens on Roman routes. Such places of travel were Spain where Paul wanted to travel-the only possibility for such a voyage was due to his citizenship. Paul claimed to be all things to all people-to the Jews he was a Jew and to the Gentiles he was a Gentile. Roman citizenship would have been his common thread in relating to the Gentiles.⁶⁸

Amos, Nehemiah and Paul are very similar in their hard work as bi-vocational ministers for the Lord. They are humble in their vocations as laborers, but glorified in their work for God. They are examples of how the people of God can be used in everyday work to accomplish extraordinary measures for God.

⁶⁸ 5987. Ben Witherington, *New Testament History: A Narrative Account* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), Kindle edition.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

For the United Methodist Church to experience revival it must develop and recontextualize the order of elder, by revisiting it's early history with lay preachers and bi-vocational ministers such as John Nelson, Jacob Albright, Martin Boehm and Richard Allen. These men of God worked with their hands as tile-makers, farmers, and stonemasons but were used by God to help lead a movement. The key for the future of the United Methodist Church is not to develop a new model for doing ministry in the twenty-first century, but to once again discover who they were from their genesis.

In the early years of Methodism, John Wesley was not a strong advocate for lay preachers, because he wanted his preachers to have proper training and to be ordained by the Church of England. Wesley's staunch view of lay preachers came to a culmination after the conversion of Thomas Maxfield. Maxfield was converted under Wesley's preaching in 1739 in Bristol. Wesley reports that Maxfield had a religious experience that was characterized as "violent," which in context could be understood as radical. It was so transformative, in that a year later in 1740, Maxfield took the initiative to preach in Wesley's absence to the Foundery Society, which he had been left to shepherd. Upon

Wesley's arrival back to the Foundery, he was quite shocked to find out that Maxfield had been preaching, and complained to his mother Susanna who had been living in the Foundery. Wesley said, "Thomas Maxfield has turned Preacher, I find. Susanna's response was, 'Take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach, as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself.' Wesley bowed before the force of truth, and could only say, 'It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.'"¹ This shows even Wesley acknowledged that God is the ultimate authority in a believer's life.

John Nelson (1707-1770)

It was precisely this interaction that changed Wesley's mind about lay preachers, and while things did not exactly work out with Maxfield in the long run, due to theological conflicts between the two, it did pave the way for a bi-vocational preacher by the name of John Nelson (1707-1770). Like Maxfield, Nelson was converted under the preaching of John Wesley, but he was converted in Moorfields. Nelson described his conversion experience in his journal:

His countenance struck such an awful dread upon me, before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock; and when he did speak, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me. When he had done, I said, "This man can tell the secrets of my heart; he hath fully described the disease of my heart, but he hath not left me there, for he hath shown the remedy, even

¹ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 115.

the blood of Jesus.” Then was my soul filled with consolation through hope.²

Nelson’s salvation experience made him question his life’s call and the direction that he felt God was taking him. Immediately, the people who were living with him in London did not want him around because of his enthusiasm about his conversion, so they kicked him out. Also, his foreman wanted him to work on the first Saturday after his conversion, but Nelson did not respond well to this. He wanted to honor God with the Sabbath and not work. Although Nelson was not fired, he decided to leave his job as well as London to make his trek back to Yorkshire. His heart could not bear the thought of his friends, family, and loved ones not hearing the Gospel. Nelson dismissed the thought of how he turned his back on guaranteed income in London.³ When he returned to Yorkshire, he entered bi-vocational ministry. During the day, he worked as a stonemason, while in the evenings he saw many people come to faith through his preaching.⁴

As John Nelson engaged in his bi-vocational ministry and saw the fruit of his labor for the Lord, he became eager to meet up with Wesley during Wesley’s next pass through Bristol. Nelson repeatedly invited Wesley to come and witness what the Lord was doing. Wesley was shocked when he arrived in Bristol. He recorded:

In May, on the repeated invitation of John Nelson, who had been for some time calling sinners to repentance at Bristol, and the

² John Nelson, *An Extract of John Nelson's Journal Being an Account of God's Dealing with His Soul...Likewise, the Oppressions He Met with... Written by Himself* (Bristol: Printed by E. Farley, 1767), 14.

³ Ibid., 37.

⁴ John Nelson, *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, ed. Thomas Jackson, vol. 1 (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1865), 92.

adjoining town in the West Riding of Yorkshire, I went to Bristol, and found his labor had not been in vain. Many of the greatest profligates in all the country were now changed. Their blasphemies were turned to praise. Many of the most abandoned drunkards were now sober: many Sabbath-breakers remembered the Sabbath to keep it holy. The whole town wore a new face. Such a change did God work by the artless testimony of one plain man! [...] Perhaps in no part of England has Methodism flourished more than in that region where Nelson first cast the prolific seed.⁵

The harvest that John Nelson's bi-vocational ministry was reaping was an unprecedented revival reminiscent of the early church. Unfortunately for Nelson, and like it had been for the apostles of the early church, Nelson experienced intense persecution as he travelled through areas like Leeds, Lancashire, Cheshire, and other territories. Along with the exhausting journeys themselves, it was not uncommon for him to encounter hostile mobs that thought his Methodist message was a threat to the statuesque religious communities. They were also not accustomed to a bi-vocational minister.

Such was the case when Nelson arrived to preach at Ackham, where two men approached him who had been contracted to kill him. They severely beat him; to the point that the two men claimed they killed him in order to collect their reward.⁶ It did not stop there, because other antagonists physically assaulted Nelson and hurled verbal insults at him about his doctrine, on Easter Sunday!⁷ Nelson recalled hearing this as his aggressors were leaving the scene: "it is impossible for him to live; and if John Wesley comes on

⁵ John Nelson, *An Extract of John Nelson's Journal Being an Account of God's Dealing with His Soul...Likewise, the Oppressions He Met with...Written by Himself* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1865), vi.

⁶ Ibid., 197.

⁷ Ibid., 199.

Tuesday, we will kill him: then we should be quite rid of the Methodists forever; for no one will dare to come if they two be killed.”⁸ Wesley shared the courage displayed by Nelson, who after getting the proper attention from a surgeon for the wound on his head went back out preaching right away.⁹

If Nelson’s oppressors could not kill him, they would cleverly plot against him by strong-arming him to become a soldier. They captured him one day after he had preached to a congregation in Adwalton.¹⁰ Nelson refused to wear the uniform of a soldier, so his captors took him to Bradford, and threw him into a dark dungeon. This only propelled Nelson’s fame even more throughout England. Nelson stood his ground and said, “I shall not fight; for I cannot bow my knee before the Lord, to pray for a man, and get up and kill him when I have done; for I know God both hears me speak and sees me act; and I should expect the lot of the hypocrite, if my actions contradict my prayers.”¹¹ In addition to the physical abuse and isolation, one sergeant even resorted to bribery to no avail in trying to get Nelson to put on the uniform. On July 28, 1744, Nelson finally received his discharge. He travelled to Newcastle, and returned to preaching God’s Word.¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 11282. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 3 (Amazon Digital Services), Kindle edition.

¹⁰ Nelson, *An Extract of John Nelson's Journal Being an Account of God's Dealing with His Soul...Likewise, the Oppressions He Met with... Written by Himself* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1865), 124.

¹¹ Ibid., 138.

¹² Ibid., 171.

Nelson was not the only one who suffered persecution; his wife did as well. While in Leeds she was heinously victimized by an angry mob of women simply because of her husband's preaching. The worst part about the whole encounter was that she was visibly pregnant. Shockingly, the mob of women did not care and beat her so badly that it resulted in a miscarriage. The Nelsons' persevered, and John Nelson said about his wife, "This treatment she has reason to remember to her life's end; but God more than made it up to her by filling her heart with peace and love."¹³

Jacob Albright (1759-1808)

Another bi-vocational minister who was pivotal to Methodism was Jacob Albright (1759-1808) who was born into Lutheranism in Douglass Township, Pennsylvania. Albright's faith became refined with fire through tragedy, as several of his children died of dysentery in 1790. This left him broken, but open to the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Albright sought worship opportunities in the Lutheran and Reformed churches. Unfortunately, it only left him in a constant state of depression without any assurance of salvation.¹⁵ Albright gave a description of his prior faith journey by saying, "We knew nothing of conversation; there no trace of prayer-meetings, Bible study, family prayers, Sunday-schools or revivals. Hardly a show of godliness remained. The power thereof was

¹³ Ibid., 105.

¹⁴ 671. F. Belton. Joyner, *The Unofficial United Methodist Handbook for Pastors* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), Kindle edition.

¹⁵ Charles Yrigoyen and Susan E. Warrick, *Historical Dictionary of Methodism* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 87.

outlawed as fanaticism. The salt had lost its savor.”¹⁶ This was the case in Albright’s Christian experience until he interacted with a few evangelistic groups, one of which was the Methodists, who were already significantly impacting the Pennsylvania-German territory. Prior to his “genuine conversion” experience in 1791 at the age of thirty-three, he described his prior spiritual state as “a walk frivolously in the path of a carnal life with little thought about the object of human life.”¹⁷ Albright’s visit with Adam Riegel, a United Brethren in Christ lay preacher, was instrumental for his conversion. Albright stated as he articulated his own conversion experience:

In a place of a worldly-minded spirit I was filled with a holy love for God and for his true children. All depression of spirit was removed; sweet comfort and deep peace permeated my being; the Spirit of God witnessed that I was a child of God; one wave of joy after another swept over my soul and such ecstasy thrilled me as cannot be described. In comparison with this all sinful pleasures and enjoyments were emptiness and vanity. My prayer was answered. My world was filled with gratitude and praise to God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift.¹⁸

After his conversion, Albright’s quest for deeper spiritual discipline and learning led him to a class meeting led by a Methodist named Isaac Davis. Albright’s newfound faith and his connection with the Methodists helped him grow. He practiced the Christian disciplines, participated in the means of grace, and learned foundational Christian truths.

¹⁶ Kenneth C. Kinghorn, *The Heritage of American Methodism* (Strasbourg, France: Éditions Du Signe, 1999), 87.

¹⁷ Kenneth R. Good, "Albright College Sesquicentennial," *The Life and Ties of Jacob Albright*, accessed September 27, 2012, <http://www.albright.edu/150/lifeandtimes.html>.

¹⁸ Kenneth C. Kinghorn, *The Heritage of American Methodism* (Strasbourg, France: Éditions Du Signe, 1999), 88.

Also, on a practical note, Albright, who was primarily a German-speaker, started to learn English. He became so confident that he began to preach and teach in the Methodist class meeting as a licensed exhorter. This only led Albright to desire to share the Gospel with the German people. In Albright's opinion, the more established Christian churches, like those in the Lutheran, Reformed, and Mennonite traditions, were the "great decline of religion."¹⁹

In order to carry out Albright's call to reach his German neighbors, he connected with like-minded people, including Martin Boehm and Wilhelm Otterbein, who sought to connect with the widespread revival of which the Methodists were a part. Naturally, they tried to express their desire to reach the German-speakers in their region to Bishop Francis Asbury, the predominant ecclesiastical leader of the movement. Asbury did not share the same vision for communicating the Gospel in the German people's vernacular. As a result, Albright went on a solo journey to bring the Gospel to his native people, while Boehm and Otterbein started their own work, which would later become the United Brethren in Christ Church.²⁰ Albright described the call he felt to reach his German-speaking brethren. "I frequently cast myself upon my knees and pleaded with hot tears that God might lead my German brethren to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and might send them faithful leaders, who should preach to them the gospel in power, awaken lifeless professors of religion, and lead them to a life of true godliness, so that they might be made partakers of the peace of God and of the inheritance of the saints in light. Thus I

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

prayed daily.”²¹ Albright still felt a strong affinity for Methodism despite not having a formal connection with its widespread membership. He practiced The Discipline and Articles of Faith as his religious polity.²² Albright started to educate himself when it came to ministry and his new task as an itinerant preacher. Many noted the success of his ministry, but like John Nelson, he underwent persecutions. He was physically threatened, attacked by mobs, and had stones thrown at him while riding on horseback. All of this was coupled with the fact he was bi-vocational.²³ Albright was referred to as “an honest tile maker” and farmer.²⁴ He took his personal faith so seriously that he wanted his vocation as a tile maker to honor God to the best of his ability, which is why he tried to perfect the art of tile-making in order to make the best possible product.²⁵

Despite his juggling act, Albright had great success at maintaining his tile business, farming, and providing for his family while carrying out his calling to share the Gospel. He loved his family and valued his strong sense of familial duties, while carrying out his duties as an itinerant preacher. Albright was a great leader not only to his

²¹ Kenneth C. Kinghorn, *The Heritage of American Methodism* (Strasbourg, France: Éditions Du Signe, 1999), 88.

²² Miller, George. *Short Description of the Effective Grace of God in the Enlightened, Protestant Preacher, Jacob Albright*, ed. James Nelson. Dayton, Ohio: <http://www.united.edu/EUB-Resources/EUB-Resources/menu-id-359.html>, 4.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ F. Belton. Joyner, *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers: Exploring Christian Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 319.

²⁵ Ibid.

converts, but also to his family, to the point that the farm and tile business were run primarily by his wife and children.²⁶

Albright's success can be attributed to his faithfulness in small beginnings. He was not concerned about the size of his congregation. Whether it was in an open field or a house, he would preach to the best of his ability, empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit. Since he had a willingness to preach whenever and wherever, without a systematic approach, his converts were scattered in many geographical locations. It is quite miraculous that his converts joined together to form anything resembling a denomination. In fact, in the 1790s Albright tried to gather some representatives from his movement for a meeting, and only five people attended. Much like Wesley, Albright never had the intent to start his own denomination, but he knew there needed to be a structure to govern the movement.

Albright's followers conducted their first General Conference in 1803, where they ordained Albright as their leader or bishop. However, he did not refer to himself as bishop but primarily as a pastor. After this organization, Albright continued his high impact pace of itinerancy, leading a growing movement, working as a tile-maker/farmer, and being a family man, which ultimately led to burnout.²⁷

²⁶ Kenneth R. Good, "Albright College Sesquicentennial," The Life and Ties of Jacob Albright, accessed September 27, 2012, <http://www.albright.edu/150/lifeandtimes.html>.

²⁷ Ibid.

This high level of activity led to his death from tuberculosis at the young age of 49. Though his ministry was short-lived, his impact has lasted well over two centuries.²⁸ Actually, the total years Albright spent in ministry were only an astounding twelve years.²⁹ The ironic part of his story is that his followers, who formed the Evangelical Association, were grafted into the United Methodist Church's merger in 1968. In a sense, Albright did join Asbury, not in the 18th century, but later in the 20th century with this new union.³⁰ The remarkable thing about Albright's leadership, unlike Wesley with the Methodists, or Otterbein and Boehm with the United Brethren Church, was that Albright carried the load for the Evangelicals as their sole leader.³¹

Martin Boehm (1725-1812)

Another leader who emerged from humble beginnings and worked as a bi-vocational minister in the Methodist movement was Martin Boehm (1725-1812). Like Albright, Boehm was born in Pennsylvania and raised as a German-speaking Mennonite. Growing up in a strict Mennonite home, Boehm was baptized, learned doctrine, and joined the church. However, Boehm felt like he simply had a religious upbringing and not

²⁸ F. Belton. Joyner, *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers: Exploring Christian Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 319.

²⁹ Charles Yrigoyen and Susan E. Warrick, *Historical Dictionary of Methodism* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 12.

³⁰ Kenneth R. Good, "Albright College Sesquicentennial," *The Life and Ties of Jacob Albright*, accessed September 27, 2012, <http://www.albright.edu/150/lifeandtimes.html>.

³¹ Kenneth C. Kinghorn, *The Heritage of American Methodism* (Strasbourg, France: Éditions Du Signe, 1999), 87.

a vital and personal relationship with Christ. The self-realization of Boehm's lack of spirituality was emphasized on the fateful day when his Mennonite congregation needed a pastor. They decided to cast lots, which was a Mennonite custom, and Boehm was selected to be the pastor.

Boehm was scared to death, because up to this point he was content managing his 400-acre farm.³² As a quiet farmer, Boehm was not used to public speaking, especially preaching. It is recorded that he would "stammer out a few words and then be obligated to sit down in shame and remorse."³³ This disappointment led him to desperation, which spurred him to cry out to God during the early months after he became a pastor; because he knew deep down he was not a true believer. One day, as Boehm was working his fields, he sought the Lord in prayer. While praying, something dramatic happened that changed his life forever. Boehm knelt down while plowing the fields at the end of each row and prayed. As Boehm prayed the word "Lost" was repeated in his mind. Then, he fell on his knees in the middle of the fields praised the Lord as Mark 10:45 came to his memory, "I have come to seek and save that which is lost." Boehm's life was forever changed.³⁴

Boehm's conversion experience ignited his preaching for the rest of his ministry as he preached on repentance and faith. On the following Sunday, many in his

³² F. Belton. Joyner, *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers: Exploring Christian Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 673.

³³ "The Story of Boehm and Otterbein," Boehm and Otterbein, Our History, accessed October 01, 2012, <http://ub.org/about/boehm-otterbein/>.

³⁴ Ibid.

congregation were converted by his preaching. Soon word spread to the other Mennonite congregations of Boehm's revivalist preaching. He began to preach wherever the Holy Spirit led him, whether it was in a church, someone's home, or even a barn. Boehm would hold revival services that were attended by a variety of people. These revivals were called "Great Meetings," and sometimes they lasted for a few days. Despite these meetings being conducted in Boehm's native language of German, it did not stop the English-speaking Methodists from attending and joining what God was doing in their midst.³⁵

One of the most famous of these Great Meetings took place in 1767 in a barn in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, known as Isaac's Long Barn. It is a landmark in the history of United Methodism, because of an encounter that birthed a denomination. One thousand people were gathered in the barn on that fateful day as Boehm was preaching. However, there was one particular man, a Dutch Reformed pastor, who was deeply moved, Philipp William Otterbein. Immediately after Boehm concluded his sermon, Otterbein eagerly introduced himself by giving Boehm a huge hug and declaring "*Wir sind Bruder*" ("We are Brethren").³⁶ Many were touched by this scene of brotherhood and did not know at the time they were witnessing not only the beginning of a close friendship, but also the beginning of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, cofounded by Boehm and Otterbein. In 1800, a General Conference was held to make the denomination official,

³⁵ Kenneth C. Kinghorn, *The Heritage of American Methodism* (Strasbourg, France: Éditions Du Signe, 1999), 81.

³⁶ Ibid.

and both Boehm and Otterbein were elected as the first bishops. Even from the beginning of this newly found denomination, The United Brethren in Christ felt themselves kin to Methodists, especially regarding the doctrine and discipline. In fact, it was a Methodist, Bishop Francis Asbury, who shared words at both Boehm and Otterbein's funerals when they died only one year apart in 1812 and 1813, both at the age of eighty-seven.³⁷

Speaking about Boehm, Francis Asbury once said, "As the head of a family, a father, a neighbor, a friend, a companion, the prominent feature of his character was goodness; you felt that he was good. His mind was strong, and well stored with the learning necessary for one whose aim is to preach Christ with apostolic zeal and simplicity."³⁸ Boehm's hard work ethic as a farmer allowed him to be acclimated to the preaching settings of local barns. His humbleness of spirit and desire to see people won to Christ allowed God to use him in a powerful way. Though he was a layman, a farmer, and was uneducated, these things did not deter his ministry. His desire for a spirit of unity made up for any deficiencies he had as he worked within the body of Christ.

In looking back at the early Methodist history, one can see how it produced capable laity who were called by God and were empowered to do significant work for the Kingdom of God. For the United Methodist Church to return to a movement, it will take giving the church back to the laity and bi-vocational pastors. These people were willing to work hard for the Lord and provided for their loved ones. Their entire families and not

³⁷ "The Story of Boehm and Otterbein," Boehm and Otterbein, Our History, accessed October 01, 2012, <http://ub.org/about/boehm-otterbein/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

just the individual leaders made sacrifices. God desires to return to using the tile-makers, farmers, and stonemasons of today.

Richard Allen (1760-1831)

Richard Allen (1760-1831) was his generation's Martin Luther King Jr. with a prophetic voice. Allen was a bi-vocational Methodist minister and circuit rider who also founded the first independent African Methodist Church, Bethel, that later led to the birthing of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC).³⁹ Allen was born to enslaved parents in 1760 in Philadelphia. In 1777, at the age of seventeen, he was converted to Christianity by the preaching of a Methodist minister. Soon after his conversion, Allen accepted his call to ministry. Allen's first sermon was to his slave master who was converted after Allen bought his freedom back. Immediately, Allen began his Methodist circuit rider career in humble beginnings without any money and not even having a formal education that allowed him to read. In fact, some believed that Allen was illiterate his entire life. Later in his life, at the time the AMEC Church elected Allen as its first Bishop, it was Allen's literate grandson who would take notes for him and accompany Allen to all his meetings.⁴⁰

Allen was known for being a reformer and entrepreneur. Allen's unique experiences allowed him to accompany General Washington's army where he hauled

³⁹ "Africans in America/Part 3/Richard Allen," PBS, Brotherly Love, accessed April 08, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3p97.html>.

⁴⁰ 105. Martha J. Simmons and Frank A. Thomas, *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), Kindle edition.

supplies for them while preaching the entire travels. Allen's bi-vocational ministry was in starting a boot and shoe business along with being a wagoner, a chimney sweep, and a whole host of other enterprises.⁴¹

Despite facing and fighting racism his entire life, Allen started a movement whether he realized it or not. Allen's reputation started to grow among Methodist as he was preaching in territories like New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. The ironic part of his circuit was that white folks would gather to hear his preaching and were in awe of this man of God. Francis Asbury, one of the first bishops of the newly formed Methodist Episcopal Church, learned about Richard Allen and desired to meet him. Asbury invited Allen to do a circuit with him into the southern parts of the country. Unfortunately, while in the throws of ministry Asbury cautioned "that Allen not intermix with slaves, and due to Allen's color, Allen would spend most nights in Asbury's carriage. Though the two parted as friends, Allen refused Asbury's offer, and in February of 1786 went to Philadelphia and St. George's."⁴² St. George's received Allen to preach on one stipulation, which was only if he agreed to preach at the 5:00 a.m. service, the only time African Americans were allowed to have their own service and preacher. In Allen's mind, he thought the arrangement would only last a few weeks, but before he realized what was happening, the congregation started to grow, and what was meant to only last a few weeks spanned for years. In one of his memoirs, as he reflected on his early days at

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² 101. Jim Ryun, Ned Ryun, and Drew Ryun, *Heroes among Us: Deep within Each of Us Dwells the Heart of a Hero* (Shippensburg, PA: Treasure House, 2002), Kindle edition.

St. George, he said, "I frequently preached twice a day, at 5 o'clock in the morning and the evening, and was not uncommon for me to preach from four to five times a day. I established prayer meetings; I raised a society for forty-two members. I saw the necessity of erecting a place of worship for colored people."⁴³ The numeric congregational growth and additional services were praised by Methodists, but the desire to have a stand alone church for people of color was strongly opposed by both white and black communities.⁴⁴ One of the reasons Allen and others wanted to have their own church was because St. George's started asking people of color to sit in the balcony and forbade them to sit in the pews any longer. Absalom Jones, a member of Allen's congregation and who was later instrumental with Allen in forming the Free African Society, refused to move out of the pews. Unfortunately, this culminated in two white members physically removing Jones during the prayer, which led to other black members walking out in protest.⁴⁵ This incident and others spurred Allen and Jones on their quest for an independent black church. They started to raise money and cast a vision for a new building but came against opposition from an elder of St. George by the name of George McClaskey.

"If you don't stop raising money for a new church, you and your friends will be turned out of the Methodist meeting," McClaskey threatened, glaring at Allen and Jones. "Have we violated any rules of discipline by raising money?" Allen asked, looking at Jones, perplexed by McClaskey's words. "I have been charged by

⁴³ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ John Thomas, "Richard Allen, Church-planting Hero," Richard Allen, Church-planting Hero, February 7, 2012, accessed April 08, 2014, <http://newcitychurch.org/2012/02/07/richard-allen-church-planting-hero/>.

the Methodist Conference to order you to stop. If you don't, you will be publicly read out of the meeting," McClaskey replied. "We are willing to abide by the discipline of the Methodist church," Allen said. "If you will show us where we have violated any law of discipline of the church, we will submit. But if there is no rule violated, we will continue on." McClaskey was growing irritated. "We will read you and all of your friends out!" "If you turn us out contrary to the rule of discipline, we will seek redress," Allen shot back. "We were dragged off our knees at St. George's, treated worse than heathens! We will continue on, with the Lord as our helper!" "You are not Methodists!" McClaskey retorted before leaving.⁴⁶

Though Allen wanted to stay very much a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church under which he was saved, he had trouble denying the need for an independent black church given the way God was using him in the fruitfulness of his ministry. As the fundraising was underway, more and more folks approached Allen about opening their own Methodist Church. In less than one year, Allen's congregation outgrew the building and had to expand it. In 1794, Francis Asbury preached the dedication service for the newly formed Bethel Church. Unfortunately, McClaskey attended the service and made a scene about Bethel Church having to be incorporated under the Methodist Conference. Allen obliged to the request but did not know he was signing the church's property rights over to the Methodist Conferences' white members. Allen realized this after ten years had gone by when the Methodist Conference tried to appoint elder James White to Bethel Church and seize control of all the church's affairs.⁴⁷ The legal battles went back and forth as the Methodist Conference still technically owned the property and forced Allen

⁴⁶ 103. Jim Ryun, Ned Ryun, and Drew Ryun, *Heroes among Us: Deep within Each of Us Dwells the Heart of a Hero* (Shippensburg, PA: Treasure House, 2002), Kindle edition.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 106.

to buy it off the auction block some fifteen years later. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court helped Allen and Bethel Church own their own property by ruling in their favor. These racial tensions and the poor treatment of black Methodists culminated in April, 1816 with the formation of the first independent black denomination in America, the African American Episcopal Church, and the fifteen ministers gathered together, laid hands on Allen, and elected him their first bishop.⁴⁸

Though Allen founded Bethel Church and the A.M.E. denomination and planted numerous congregations, he was a humble servant in a bi-vocational role. Bethel Church agreed to pay Allen \$500 a year for his salary support as pastor. Allen received a total of \$800 of salary over thirty-five years! Despite having a low source of salary from the church, Allen's business ventures helped him out. At the time of his death, Allen's estate included numerous rental prosperities and assets estimated between \$30,000 and \$40,000, which in 1831 was an incredible amount of money.⁴⁹

Because of Richard Allen's sacrifices in the early years of the A.M.E. movement, the denomination now has 7,000 congregations, with nearly 4,000 pastors, and 2,510,000 in membership, spanning over thirty countries and four different continents.⁵⁰ In 2012, the A.M.E. church entered a "Pan-Methodist Celebration," an agreement of full

⁴⁸ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁹ John Thomas, "Richard Allen, Church-planting Hero," Richard Allen, Church-planting Hero, February 7, 2012, accessed April 08, 2014, <http://newcitychurch.org/2012/02/07/richard-allen-church-planting-hero/>.

⁵⁰ "African Methodist Episcopal Church - World Council of Churches," African Methodist Episcopal Church - World Council of Churches, accessed April 09, 2014, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/african-methodist-episcopal-church>.

communion and racial reconciliation with the United Methodist Church and its sister African denominations, such as African Methodist Episcopal Zion, African Union Methodist Protestant, Christian Methodist Episcopal, and Union American Methodist Episcopal. This is a direct fulfillment for what Richard Allen desperately wanted nearly 200 years ago.⁵¹

⁵¹ Linda Bloom, "Pan-Methodists Celebrate Together," United Methodist Connections, May 1, 2012, accessed April 09, 2014, <http://umcconnections.org/2012/05/01/pan-methodists-celebrate-together/>.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

No matter what the topic or issue is in ministry, all doctrine must be first rooted in Trinitarian theology. Unfortunately, this has become a lost art. The words of Ted Peter ring true: “Trinitarian thinking has proved to be one of the best kept secrets in theology during the last half of the twentieth century.” For the church to do theology, regardless of the issues it will face in the future, it must be done with a Trinitarian lens. It is not a coincidence that the need for church renewal hinges on the essential truth that the Church must rediscover Trinitarian theology. To move forward with a Trinitarian theology, it is important to actually move backwards and see the developments of the doctrine of the Trinity from the Early Church. As Stanley Gretnz puts it, “The genesis of Trinitarian theology lies in history, above all, in the history of Jesus the Son, but more particularly, in the history of his relationship to the one he called ‘Abba’ that occurred within the context of the promissory history of Israel...the doctrine of the Trinity is less as a statement about the eternal nature of God apart from the world than as retelling of history that the early Christian faith was under fire, it was important for followers to have a firm

understanding of what they believed, which is why the Trinitarian doctrine was initially articulated.”¹ Even the first Christians faced many questions about the doctrine, because it was confusing to them coming from the monotheistic religion of Judaism. This is why some questions were left hanging until they were addressed with the now famous *tres personae, una substantia* by Tertullian, and the first theologian to use the word, “Trinity.”² While the councils helped with affirming the full divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there would still be questions facing the Church as to the relationship between the three. These questions and the debates that followed would eventually contribute to a permanent divide within the Eastern and Western divisions of the Church.

Courageously, early believers began the incorporation process of God in three persons. It started with interpretations of the Old Testament. They understood God as The Father, the incarnation, and as the Holy Spirit. The concept of God as incarnate embodied the importance of confessing the Messiah or Christ as Lord, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit fueled the Early Church. These three strands were integrally woven together to combat heretical teachings of the day.³

Before the doctrine of the Trinity fully came into being, the precursor was the church’s stance on exactly who Jesus was as God. One of the early heresies in the church surrounded the humanity and deity of Christ. Attempts to combat the early heresies were

¹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 74.

² 1103. Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), Kindle edition.

³ *Ibid.*, 1027-1030.

crucial.⁴ One of the groups who posed contrary beliefs about Jesus was the modalistic monarchians, who were mainly influenced by the teaching of Sabellius. The monarchians believed that God appeared in different “modes,” which took away the emphasis of personhood or “adoptionism” that meant Jesus was adopted into the Godhead and was not preexistent.⁵ Some early church theologians like Hippolytus and Tertullian began to formulate a doctrine of the Trinity, but they emphasized a sort of subordination, meaning the Father ranks first and the Son and Holy Spirit come in as a close second and third. Sound doctrine was the result to combat attack and heresy. The Church was forced to rise up and articulate what they believed and clung to.

Following the monarchians came the Arians whose heretical doctrine would force the church’s theologians to formulate sound Trinitarian doctrine. Stanley Grenz succinctly lines out the rise of Arianism. He states:

Arius could not conceive of this as an eternal movement within God. Rather, he suggested that the biblical verb “to beget” means “to make” – the Father made the Son, who therefore is a creature. As a creature, whom the Father created out of nothing, the Word must have had a beginning: “the Son is not unbegotten, nor part of the unbegotten in any way ... before he was begotten or created or appointed or established, he did not exist; for he was not unbegotten. Like Sabellius, therefore, Arius believed that the Trinitarian distinctions are external to God, that in his own eternal nature God is one, not three.”⁶

⁴ Ibid., 1030.

⁵ Ibid., 1047.

⁶ Ibid., 1060.

The Arian controversy culminated with the First Ecumenical Council, the Council of Nicea in 325, where the Church leaders unanimously expressed the belief that Christ was a fully human and fully divine being of the same substance as the Father. Following this council, Archbishop Athanasius' work was not done as he began to defend the church's stance on pneumatology and the Holy Spirit's role in the Godhead. Athanasius said, "If we are made sharers of the divine nature through our partaking of the Spirit, it would be only a madman who would say that the Spirit is of created nature and not of the nature of God."⁷ Athanasius' sound theology once again influenced the Church's beliefs, as the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople was held in 381.

The Cappadocian Fathers (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus) built on the sturdy foundation laid by Athanasius, as they helped formulate the classical and widely accepted view of the Trinity. But, the Cappadocian Fathers were very careful about how they handled formulating their doctrine of the Trinity, so they were not perceived as inventing a polytheistic religion, nor did they want to fall into modalism like the monarchians.⁸ The middle ground they found was a play on the following:

In a formulating a conception of God, the Cappadocians found two Greek synonyms helpful, *ousia* ("essence") and *hypostasis* ("center of consciousness" or "independent reality"). They declared that God is one *ousia* but three *hypostases*. The three "independent realities" share the same will, nature, and essence (that is, the one *ousia*). Yet each has special properties or activities.⁹

⁷ Ibid., 1073.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 1086.

The Cappadocian Fathers believed in subordination taking place in the Trinity, while they maintained the equality between the three persons of the Trinity. They maintained the uniqueness or essence between the three, but believed “the Father "generates," the Son "is generated," and the Spirit "proceeds.”¹⁰ In spite of the Cappadocian Fathers formulating the doctrine of the Trinity, the discussion among theologians and the church is continually ongoing, which has resulted in some grumblings between Eastern and Western Christians’ views of the Trinity. Grenz breaks down the differing views simplistically when he says, “Basically, Eastern theologians tended to emphasize procession within the Godhead. Their Western counterparts, in contrast, focused more on the relations within the Trinity.”¹¹ The mounting tensions between different schools of thought within the East and West, Greek and Latin, and various modes of interpretation led to another controversy that would further the ripple across the church like never before. This controversy became known as the “*Filioque*” clause.¹²

The “*Filioque*” clause became widespread due to Augustine’s work, *The Trinity*.

Augustine added a clause to indicate:

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. A regional Spanish synod (the third Council of Toledo, A.D. 589) incorporated Augustine's view into the Latin translation of the ancient creed, adding the word *filioque* ("and from the Son") to the description of the Spirit's procession. Then in 809, a synod of Aachen (in Germany) gave its approval to this development,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 1097.

¹² Ibid., 1110.

adopting the altered Spanish version of the Latin text as the official creed for the newly constituted Holy Roman Empire.¹³

This was a hard pill for the Eastern Church to swallow, and it evoked a response, as they perceived that the Western Church had taken it upon themselves to tinker with the doctrine of the Trinity. Eventually, the controversy overpowered any spirit of unity that would keep the church intact. This led to the Great Schism in 1054 that would forever make a divide between the Eastern and Western divisions of the Church. Prior to this, the Church had persevered heretical outside attacks. Unfortunately, the battles within resulted in a schism instead of bringing unity. This marked the beginning of many divides and ripples that would take place in the universal Church.¹⁴

Theological convergence surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity halted for some time after the schism, because of the divide it already caused. There were other theological issues that came to the forefront, and a few hundred years later the Reformation resulted in another great schism, this time within the Western church. This schism overshadowed any additional focus on discussion about the Trinity for a while.¹⁵

After the fallout of the Reformation around the 1700s, theologians began to recover the doctrine of the Trinity, starting with Friedrich Schleiermacher, followed by Karl Barth in the twentieth century, and today's contemporaries such as Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg. The task is difficult especially in an age

¹³ Ibid., 1121.

¹⁴ Charles E. Gutenson, *The Right Church: Live like the First Christians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 24.

¹⁵ Ibid.

when doctrine is being challenged much like it was during the first few centuries of the church. The hope is that by rediscovering Trinitarian doctrine, it will be used to bring further renewal to the Church.¹⁶ As the twentieth century theologian LaCugna explains, “The doctrine of the Trinity is in fact the most practical of all doctrine. Among other things, it helps us articulate our understanding of the gospel’s demands; how personal conversion is related to social transformation; what constitutes ‘right relationship’ within the Christian community and in society at large; how best to praise and worship God; and what it means to confess faith in and be baptized into the life of God of Jesus Christ.”¹⁷ Perhaps, the breakdown in the church has been the use of the Trinity as almost a “tagline” to close out a prayer, instead of as the central theological lens through which the church can examine and preserve its relationality, presence, equality, non-domination, unity, differentiation, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ For instance, what would it look like for the church to model an intimacy of personhood, where we valued the sacred worth of all human beings? There would be less division and more unity.

There are many divisions over theological debates and interpretation, but perhaps the one that has continued to rear its ugly head is between clergy and laity. It goes all the way back to before the Reformation when laity wanted more of a role. But since then, the Protestant Church in North America has denied lay people a more prevalent role, for

¹⁶ 1140. Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), Kindle edition.

¹⁷ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, “The Practical Trinity,” *Christian Century* 109/22 (July 15-22, 1992): 679.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 58-73.

several reasons. If the Church were to model the concept of the priesthood of all believers with a Trinitarian lens of communion, churches could be revolutionized. Ecclesiology needs to be rooted in Trinitarian theology, as Volf puts it:

Would it not be odd to claim there are no analogues to God in creation and yet to maintain, as a Christian theologians must, that human beings are made in the image of God? And would it not be anomalous to insist that human beings, created for communion with the Triune...God and renewed through faith and baptism into the Triune name "according to the likeness of God (Ephesians 4:24), should not seek to be like God in their mutual relations? If the idea of an image that is *not* supposed to reflect the reality of which it is an image does not strike us as odd, Jesus' injunction in the Sermon on the Mount should set us straight: "Be perfect" (Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:16). The earthly children should be like their heavenly parent, he states (v.45); the character of God should shape the character and behavior of those who worship.¹⁹

Unity is not achieved simply because everybody looks like you, acts like you, comes from the same socio-economic background, or has the same education or vocation; it comes from differentiation. The Trinity perfectly captures a unity. But also, as Moltmann puts it, "each of the Persons possesses the divine nature in a non-interchangeable way; each presents it in his own way."²⁰ Each Person in the Trinity is unique, and has its own function, which is the type of diversity the church should represent. After all, this is foundational to Christianity, as seen at the start of the church with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost where many languages were being spoken. Also, this is expected at the eschaton, where the gospel will be brought to all people in their own

¹⁹ Miroslav Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (1998): 404.

²⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity, and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 195.

native tongues. The Kingdom of God tears down all social barriers as Jesus did in his earthly ministry. This is a call for the church to reflect this type of diversity.²¹ The church is called to mirror the Trinity as Moltmann says:

Through the sending of the creative Spirit, the Trinitarian history of God becomes a history that is open to the world, open to men and women and open to the future. Through the experience of the life-giving Spirit in faith, in baptism, and in fellowship of believers, people are interrogated into the history of the Trinity. Through the Spirit of Christ they not only become participants in the eschatological history of the new creation, but through the Spirit of the Son they also become at the same time participants in the Trinitarian history of God himself.²²

Seeing the Trinity as relational sets the example for the church to be rooted in relationships. Trivially put this way: if there are no people, then the church does not exist. The priesthood of all believers suggests that every person is on an equal playing field.²³ Also, beyond being in community and relational, the Trinity is present among its members, which is the call of the church as well. Muthiah believes this presence can be achieved in three ways.

First, as the Trinity takes in the world's suffering, so the church must be incarnational and present in the world to also bear its suffering. Second, presence is lived out through openness. The church must be open to all people outside of itself, and not

²¹ Robert A. Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-first Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 68.

²² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity, and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 171.

²³ Robert A. Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-first Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 59.

exist for self-preservation. This can be lived out in simple ways that Christians often take for granted, such as extending the hand of friendship outside of the church to our neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and in some cases even one's family.²⁴ Moltmann says, "Christian friendship cannot be lived in the inner circle of one's equals but only in open affection and public respect for other people."²⁵ Third, the local church can be present in a relational sense like the Trinity, by actually having a relationship with other local churches. This can be frightening to some clergy. But as Volf points out, the church cannot be truly catholic if there is a lack of presence or openness to other local bodies. This call is issued to all Christians, when it comes to living out presence, it must mirror the Trinity.²⁶

Equality is another key characteristic found in the Trinity. No one Person in the Trinity has a greater or lesser role. Moltmann says "here the three Persons are equal; they live and are manifested in one another and through one another."²⁷ Along the same line as Moltmann, Volf spins it a bit differently when he says, "in a community of perfect love between persons who share all divine attributes a notion of hierarchy is unintelligible."²⁸

²⁴ Ibid., 61.

²⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity, and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 90.

²⁶ Robert A. Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-first Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 62.

²⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity, and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 176.

²⁸ Miroslav Volf, "'The Trinity Is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement,'" *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (1998): 407.

If the Church is to mirror the Trinity in regards to equality than the priesthood of all believers should reflect it. Structure is necessary, but not when it alienates people or forces a hierarchy that makes it nearly impossible for laity to help lead the church.²⁹

The Church can also mirror the Trinity by being non-dominating. Muthiah defines non-domination by asserting, "The relations are consensual and free. No one Person in the Trinity dictates what the other Persons must do. No one Person of the Trinity forces the others to participate in the relationships or to act in certain ways. No one Person of the Trinity imposes decisions upon the other Persons."³⁰ In a word, non-domination is marked by, freedom. In all, Jesus' interactions and relationships were not inundated with manipulation or fear, but freedom. The early believers followed Jesus while he was on earth because they wanted to of their own free wills. Jesus' life and message were never to impose himself onto others, as Walter Wink notes, "Jesus is not looking for a kingdom from himself or anyone else where power can be wielded in order to *impose* God's will on the world. He is inaugurating a domination-free society."³¹ Jesus' style of leadership can cause the church to get rid of top-down approaches that run like a corporate or militant model.³²

²⁹ Robert A. Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-first Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 63.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 64.

³² Ibid.

Domination and a dictatorship mentality easily crush any chance for unity. In the Trinity, one sees more than just a harmony. Moltmann sees it as follows: “The unity of the Trinity is tied to the mutual indwelling and reciprocal interpenetration of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”³³ This explanation is captured in the Greek word *Perichoresis* (περιχώρησις) that implies a mutual interdependence on one another.³⁴ It is impossible for humans to have identical *perichoresis* to the Trinity, but the call to every Christian is for him or her to experience *perichoresis* with God, which could bring unity to the Church. The call is issued and modeled by Jesus in John 17:22-23. “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”³⁵ Christians believe the Spirit of God dwells inside of them. When they come together, whether it is for worship or fellowship, there is a “*mediated* indwelling.” Perhaps this is not on the level of the Trinity, but it is a glimpse into *perichoresis*. Volf describes the encounter of Christians with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that is inside of them as individuals and their fellow brother and/or sister when he writes:

In personal encounters, that which the other person is flows
consciously and unconsciously into that which I am. The reverse is

³³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity, and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), viii.

³⁴ 1195. Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), Kindle edition.

³⁵ "John 17:22-23," in *The Holy Bible: ESV, English Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments*. (New York: American Bible Society, 2001), accessed October 6, 2012, <http://www.biblegateway.com>.

also true. In this mutual giving and receiving, we give to others not only something, but also a piece of ourselves, something of that which we have made of ourselves in communion with others; and from others we take not only something, but also a piece of them. Each person gives of himself or herself to others, and each person in a unique way takes up others into himself or herself. This is the process of mutual internalization of personal characteristics occurring in the church through Holy Spirit indwelling Christians.³⁶

Pneumatology within Trinitarian theology empowers the Church and believers for the transformation of the world. The same Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is still alive in the world today. Peter Bellini succinctly unpacks the role of the Holy Spirit. He argues, “He is the primary missionary in this eschaton, and his mission is to reveal the person and work of Jesus Christ in the world. The Holy Spirit is the master evangelist sent into the world to convict it of sin, righteousness, and judgment and to call all to Christ. Christ then calls his body to be filled with the Spirit of Pentecost and to participate in his work. Thus the acts of the Holy Spirit become the acts of the church.”³⁷ With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost came the charismata, or that which is known today as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as described in 1 Corinthians 12. God is no respecter of persons. Therefore, God gives certain gifts to whomever God chooses. Gifts are given to every Christian; this is one of the many reasons God does not call a Christian to be a lone-ranger, doing everything by him or herself. The wide distribution of gifts to all believers makes them interdependent. The giftings God has given believers are

³⁶ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 209.

³⁷ Peter J. Bellini, “Participation and Some Implications for a Theology of Missions,” in *Participation: Epistemology and Mission Theology* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010), 165.

diverse, but they are brought into unity as the one body of Christ called to glorify God. One gift is not greater than another, as Christians often believe. All gifts of the Spirit are on an equal playing field.³⁸

What ought to be done with tensions that exist between clergy, laity, and the structure that is already in place? The biblical principle of the *Priesthood of All Believers* is how as a collective the people of God in the New Testament Church and the Early Church carried out ministry. These approaches, along with the abuses of the medieval Catholic culture, the Continental Reformers, and the English Reformers, influenced Wesley's view of the Church. In his interpretation of Wesley, Dennis Campbell argues that the ministry of the whole people of God is determined in acts of humble obedience.³⁹

Wesley's understanding of ministry influenced the rest of the Wesleyan tradition with the belief that the ordained ministry was apart from a preaching ministry, which Wesley believed anybody could pursue. Early Methodism expected their laity and preachers to adhere to an exemplary life with works of piety and spiritual disciplines. Wesley did not intend for Methodism to be a separate faction, but to be a renewal group of sorts, remaining under the larger umbrella of the Church of England. He cared deeply for the spiritual well being of all those under the care of early Methodists. Wesley's concern was for the needs of Methodists to receive the sacraments from ordained ministers. It is because of this pastoral care that Wesley was persuaded to ordain Francis

³⁸ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 68-72.

³⁹ Dennis M. Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination in Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 38.

Asbury and Thomas Coke. He ordained them as ministers in order, so that they could administer the sacraments. Ordination in American Methodism developed to be similar to the Catholic view, in that the ordination process itself was not on the local church level. Instead, the minister was sent and assigned to a local church after ordination.⁴⁰

Wesley recognized two facets in the calling to ordained ministry. The first he described as an *inner call*, which is or will be confirmed through the gifts and graces for ministry that one is given. The second he described as the *outward call* that comes from outside the individual through the church. Once a clergy is ordained, the person is understood to represent something a lot bigger than the self; he or she is representing Christ. The *Yoke of Obedience* reaffirms that ordained clergy are to live as, “under orders” which imply lives of obedience and service.⁴¹

Bi-vocational ministry must be rooted in a sound theology of work. However defining what work is can become problematic because there are many differing opinions. Because of this I have selected some of the best definitions that are well suited for theological conversation. Scholar David Jensen defines work as “[The] topic — human labor — is rather foreign to most systematic theologies. Not often have the codifiers of Christian doctrine explored the topic of work as an explicitly theological theme.”⁴² It is alarming that Jensen makes the claim that theologians have not addressed

⁴⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁴¹ Ibid., 53.

⁴² David Hadley Jensen, *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), x.

the theology of work in great detail, especially when the Bible has numerous scriptures cited about work. If the modern scholars of the Church have become silent about the theology of work over time then it becomes difficult for the Church to have an understanding of the importance of bi-vocational ministry. The theology of work must come to the forefront of the Church in the twenty-first century as mainline denominations are declining and facing extinction. Jensen summarizes his theology of work as it pertains to Scripture by arguing:

Biblical narratives overflow with work. Between the opening lines of Genesis, which portray God as a worker, and the closing chapter of Revelation, with a vision of new creation, God labors. One of the distinguishing characteristics of biblical faith is that God does not sit enthroned in heaven removed from work, willing things into existence by divine fiat. Unlike the gods of the Greco-Roman mythologies, who absolve themselves of work [or make work a punishment for troublesome persons, e.g., Sisyphus] dining on nectar and ambrosia in heavenly rest and contemplation — the biblical God works.⁴³

Jensen stresses how God is a working God who is not far off and aloof but a participatory God who is the creator and sustainer of the universe continually at work. Unfortunately as New Testament scholar Ben Witherington points out, Jensen does not emphasize how humanity is to participate in collaboration with God when it comes to work.⁴⁴ Theologian Frederick Buechner's defines work as "The place where your deep gladness meets the

⁴³ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁴ 38. Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), Kindle edition.

world's deep need.”⁴⁵ Buechner's definition brings into account more emphasis on personal fulfillment, however, begs the argument, as Witherington suggests, that not all activities a Christian participates in bring glory to God or edify others like the business of war, especially in light of Jesus' Sermon on The Mount.⁴⁶

Theologian Miroslav Volf suggests, “Work is honest, purposeful, and methodologically specified social activity whose primary goal is the creation of products or states of affairs that can satisfy the needs of working individuals or their co-creatures, or (if primarily an end in itself) activity that is necessary in order for acting individuals to satisfy their needs apart from the need for the activity itself.”⁴⁷ Again, the problem with Volf's definition is similar to Jensen's because it suggests work is a means to an end in order to gratify humanity's needs.⁴⁸ However, Volf touches on the theology of work in light of the eschatological reality Christians live in by stating, “Christian life is life in the Spirit of the new creation or it is not Christian life at all. And the Spirit of God should determine the whole life, spiritual as well as secular, of a Christian. Christian work must, therefore, be done under the inspiration of the Spirit and in the light of the coming new

⁴⁵ Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 119.

⁴⁶ 59. Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), Kindle edition.

⁴⁷ Miroslav Volf. *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 10-11.

⁴⁸ 60. Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), Kindle edition.

creation.”⁴⁹ Therefore, work is not something that pertains to the old creation but the anticipation of a new creation when the Kingdom of God comes to its fullness on earth as lived out in the Lord’s Prayer when Christians pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus himself speaks about work in an eschatological framework in John 9:4 when he says, “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.” Witherington gives his definition of work with this eschatological reality in mind when he asserts, “Any necessary and meaningful task that God calls and gifts a person to do and which can be undertaken to the glory of God and for the edification and aid of human beings, being inspired by the Spirit and foreshadowing the realities of the new creation.”⁵⁰ Work was God’s intention from the beginning of creation and does not cease to exist with the coming eschaton. Witherington’s definition of work rocks the American understanding of work being for certain duration of the day like a “nine-to-five” job simply looking forward to retirement. Work is a characteristic humanity must be ingrained with as being created in the image of God.⁵¹ An example of this is the work of monks following the Benedictine Rule at Western Priory. These monks engage in constant work and prayer by making cheeses and maple syrup to sell. They view their work and prayer together as an act of worship to

⁴⁹ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 79.

⁵⁰ 91. Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), Kindle edition.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

God.⁵² This is reminiscent of Brother Lawrence, the seventeenth century monk from France who wrote, *Practicing the Presence of God*. While working in the Discalced Carmelite monastery he was assigned the task of kitchen duty where he cooked, cleaned, and managed the tedious chores of the monastery. Brother Lawrence did not get down on himself for these chores but learned to do them to the glory of God as he said,

"Men invent means and methods of coming at God's love, they learn rules and set up devices to remind them of that love, and it seems like a world of trouble to bring oneself into the consciousness of God's presence. Yet it might be so simple. Is it not quicker and easier just to do our common business wholly for the love of him?"⁵³

Brother Lawrence had a theology of work and how it related to God's love. He did not consider "common business" as mundane work but an avenue in experiencing God's love and sharing it with the world. Brother Lawrence's writing went on to impact the like of John Wesley and A.W. Tozer, to name a few.⁵⁴

Work, when a Christian does it, no matter if it be as a custodian, chef, doctor, lawyer, or even pastor, is ministry because of the doctrine that Reformer Martin Luther emphasized, *The Priesthood of All Believers*. All Christians must participate in ministry, and a theology of work can be connected to vocation. The upper echelon of Roman society did not appreciate work that they viewed as minimal which required one's hands

⁵² Ibid., 155.

⁵³ "Brother Lawrence," Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed April 10, 2014, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/lawrence>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

to get dirty. And yet for Jews like Jesus who was a carpenter, and Paul who was a leatherworker, they did not see a distinction.⁵⁵

The church is called to mirror the Trinity. It should be done, so it will empower God's people to be the priesthood of all believers. It is imperative for the Church to rediscover the doctrine of the Trinity, which will only make the church stronger in the years to come. It may not be a coincidence that the church in North American is declining and struggling so much, because of poor doctrine that has become individualistic and has lost the central importance of the Trinity.

⁵⁵ 387. Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), Kindle edition.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOPICAL FOUNDATIONS

In order to understand the current reality of the UMC and mainline denominations the first priority is to understand and define the problem. Christendom in the United States is no longer a cultural norm and mainline denominations have been directly affected by this reality. The fact remains that since the 1968 merger in Dallas between The Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren the newly formed UMC has experienced continuous decline in North America for over forty years. The decline was even taking place for both denominations prior to the merger. Extensive research shows that by 1970 the UMC reported a total membership of 10,671,744 and 40,653 organized churches. In a fourteen-year period, by 1984, the UMC had lost 13% of its total membership bringing it down to 9,266,853. That translated to a weekly loss of 1,930 members. Worship attendance declined by 11% in the fourteen-year period along with closures of 2,665 local churches. The UMC is not the only mainline denomination that declined in total membership, worship attendance, and church closures. This was the history for The Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ, The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Presbyterian

Church in America (PCA), and The Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PC-USA) as well.¹

Recent numbers that have been studied by experts such as Lovett Weems through the Lewis Leadership Center have shown how numbers have continued to decline when it comes to virtually every category involving people. Weems shows this in figure 2 to illustrate the point.²

Figure 2.

The Decline

Decreases 2009 as % of 1968
Number of churches 80%
Worship attendance 78%
Membership 71%
Professions of faith 57%
Children and youth* 44%
*Children and youth figures begin with 1974 when they were reported for the first time.

¹ William H. Willimon and Robert L. Wilson, "Rekindling the Flame - Chapter One," Rekindling the Flame - Chapter One, 1987, accessed April 10, 2014, <http://www.cmpage.org/rekindling/chapt1.html#graph>. This group formed the Evangelical Church of North America in Portland, Oregon, which now has 127 congregations and over 11,500 members. Methodist statistics are from the annual editions of the *General Minutes of the Annual Conferences of The United Methodist Church* (Council on Finance and Administration, Evanston, Ill., 1968-1985).

² 223. Lovett H. Weems, *Focus: The Real Challenges That Face the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), Kindle edition.

The previous statistics have shown how decline has hampered the UMC; however, it is important to note increases that have take place since the 1960s. Such increases have been in categories like net assets with endowments, buildings and property. Also total giving and spending per giving units has increased because of inflation. Figure 3 shows how dramatically money has increased over time since the 1968 merger.³

Figure 3.

Giving and Assets

Increases: 2009 as % of 1968
Net Assets: 217%
Total giving: 144%
Giving per worshiper: 178%
The 1968 figures are adjusted for inflation to 2009 dollars.

Nearly 28,000 UMC churches reported having no building debt in 2009 but had appreciated building assets including parsonages that totaled over \$52 billion dollars. Churches have spent a lot more as well. After taking inflation into account, the change translates to a 44% spending increase. However, because of discipleship and other programs, people are giving more to the mission of the UMC, but it is drawing from a

³ Ibid., 207-211.

smaller membership base, and a majority of givers are over the age of seventy years old.⁴ Up until 2007, declining membership congregations were continuing to give from \$100 million to over \$300 million since 1968, factoring in inflation. Unfortunately this all changed in 2008 with the economic meltdown and housing crisis. The United States entered the worst recession since the Great Depression. The following statistics reveal the severity of the recession:

- At least 8 million jobs were lost with 740,000 jobs lost in January 2009 alone
- Americans lost \$13 trillion dollars of wealth
- Hundreds of bank failures
- The S&P 500 dropped 57% from its high in 2007 with an almost stock market panic mentality.
- In some parts of the country, home prices fell 32%
- According to RealtyTrac Inc, the Great Recession caused 2.5 million homes to be foreclosed on with millions more having foreclosure filings, and by 2009, 1 in 45 homes were in default.
- By March 2009, Citigroup was worth \$1 per share, and Bank of America was at \$3 per share⁵

The recession of 2008 impacted most nonprofits, churches, and denominations, including the UMC. In 2009 the UMC did not recover financially and saw a decline of \$60 million dollars.⁶ When the UMC was growing as most mainline denominations were in the 1950s, the average age was younger than the rest of the general population. Today the

⁴ Ibid., 219.

⁵ Sam Montana, "What Caused the Great Recession of 2008-2009?," All Articles RSS, accessed April 15, 2014, <http://economics-the-economy.knoji.com/what-caused-the-great-recession-of-20082009/>.

⁶ Ibid., 237.

UMC is aging, and in 2009 the death rate increased 35% since the UMC's inception in 1968.⁷

The declining people numbers with attendance, membership, and professions of faith, and the increased prices of inflation and average age of members all culminate to what Lovett Weems, UMC expert, and director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary call the *Death Tsunami*.⁸ One reason for Weems' rational is that between 2021 and 2050, there will be a higher death rate that has not been seen since the 1940s. There will be more deaths in 2050 than in 2010 by 50%.⁹ The preoccupation for local churches to make budget every year with dwindling attendance interferes with the mission of "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."¹⁰ Weems believes that this could be an opportunity for the UMC, jurisdictions, annual conferences, districts, and local churches, to reset a financial baseline and focus on mission and outreach. This has already taken place with the 2016 general conference lowering the number of delegates to save money and a number of annual conferences shortening their days to cut budgets for conferences and local churches that send pastors and delegates.¹¹

⁷ Ibid., 256.

⁸ Ibid., 261.

⁹ Ibid., 273.

¹⁰ The United Methodist Church's mission statement.

¹¹ Ibid., 373.

There are several items related to how the United Methodist Church can invest in clergy and laity in order to build them up for the work of ministry. Resources need to be redirected to where there is vitality. The wisest initiative the UMC has implemented over the last quadrennium is the Path 1 initiative to plant 650 congregations. Although they fell short of the goal, they still planted 621 churches, which provided an overall growth of 223% since the 2004-2007 quadrennium. The UMC reports they are planting at a rate of “11.5 new church[es] per month (compared with 4.23 new church starts per month from 2004-2007).”¹² Since the success of the Path 1 initiative, they have set the audacious goal of planting 1,000 new congregations by the end of the 2013-2016 quadrennium.¹³ The breakdown of where a majority of the faith communities that were planted shows the most were in the South Eastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) as seen in figure 4.

Figure 4.

Jurisdictional Snapshot of Church Planting Activity¹⁴

	NCJ	NEJ	SCJ	SEJ	WJ	Total
2008	20	12	31	53	12	128
2009	35	17	30	38	25	145

¹² Gary A. Shockley, *New Church Starts Update*, technical paper (Nashville: Path 1 New Church Starts Division at GBOD, 2012), 1. Path 1 defines there church planting strategies.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. This figure is adapted from the report giving by Gary Shockley to convey the breakdown of where churches have been planted within the UMC in the United States.

2010	38	20	37	55	15	165
2011	31	25	22	50	8	136
2012	24	18	26	36	6	110
Total	148	92	146	232	66	684

The congregations represented many different types of models in church planting such as: Conference starts (an annual conference decides to plant a faith community in a geographical area where no UMC churches exist), connectional “parachute drop” projects (a planter appointed to a certain area without existing relationships, launch team or facility to start), partner church projects (a healthy church giving birth to a new church start in a Mother-Daughter scenario or multiple churches to one new church start), multi-site projects (a congregation attempts to multiply itself in other geographical areas and venues), Elijah/Elisha projects (a new church start is birthed out of a dying congregation or one trying to “pass the mantle”), vital mergers (two or more declining/dying churches coming together under a new vision to become a church plant), church-within-a-church (an existing congregation attempts to reach a different demographic within their community in a second service), non-traditional (missional or monastic communities that are more grassroots but still seek to multiply themselves), surprise birth projects (a church from another denomination may choose to affiliate with the UMC or a ministry may seek to become a church), lay-led projects (laity who

may not have the credentials nor education plant a new faith community), part-time projects (bi-vocational or part-time pastors who are working a job as tent-makers), and racial-ethnic projects (multiethnic church plants trying to reach groups outside of the traditional Anglo-Saxon UMC churches that are in existence).¹⁵

All of the above models mentioned abide to certain characteristics that Path 1 defines as a faith community. The characteristics are:

- Theologically Wesleyan
- Worship frequently and celebrate the sacraments
- Have effective systems for developing disciples of Jesus Christ
- Teach and practice biblical stewardship
- Are missional and work toward community transformation
- Receive new members
- Will embed multiplying DNA in all ministries and plant other new congregations in three to five years
- Will remain connected and accountable to The United Methodist Church¹⁶

Though the strategies may vary, the characteristics of planting congregations according to Path 1 should share similarities in DNA while the methodology varies extensively based on approach, planter, and context.

While the UMC is declining in America, there have been bright spots because of Path 1. For instance, in 2011 the two annual conferences that grew the most, while the rest either declined or plateaued, were The Kentucky and The Greater New Jersey

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "UMC Pathone," UMC Pathone, accessed April 15, 2014, <http://www.path1.org/characteristics.php>.

Conferences. The Kentucky Conference had planted fifteen churches in the last quadrennium, which led to overall membership and attendance growth. It was the largest growth they had seen in nearly sixteen years. A focus on planting new churches leads to growth.¹⁷ Also, the Greater New Jersey Conference witnessed growth in membership and attendance for the first time in forty-five years. It is because both of these annual conferences prioritized church planting instead of focusing on revitalization.¹⁸

If church planting is so critical to growth in reaching the lost and in reinvigorating the institution to become a movement again, then it needs to be prioritized accordingly. Perhaps the sale of empty buildings and the liquidation of assets from dying congregations can be the seed where new life is found. After all, Jesus put it best when he told his disciples preceding his death, “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives.”¹⁹ Also, the reduction of apportionment dollars in order to invest that money back into local churches can transform the UMC from the bottom all the way to the top; this will be more effective

¹⁷ Heather Hahn, "Still in 2011 Numbers Show U.S. Members Still Sliding," UMC.org, August 2, 2012, Church & Ministry, accessed October 24, 2012, <http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=1wL4KnN1LtH>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "John 12:24." In *The Holy Bible: ESV, English Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments*. New York: American Bible Society, 2001. Accessed September 8, 2012. <http://www.biblegateway.com>. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version.

than relying on a “top-down” approach. The possibilities of how many churches can be planted could be endless with more resources being redirected into movements such as church planting, instead of preserving the institution where the upper echelon receives pay increases and more general agencies are created.

Desperation and decline often lead to innovation, as seen with Path 1. This has opened up major opportunities for church planters and clergy, but there is another initiative that has been created by Path 1 that leads right to the roots of early Methodism and the Early Church. It has to do with laity taking on more of a role. This has been labeled as The Lay Missionary Planting Network (LMPN). The LMPN tagline is fitting, “Equipping Ordinary People for an Extraordinary Harvest.”²⁰ It is founded on the Acts 4:13 which states, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.”²¹ The LMPN vision to reach the harvest is as follows:

We believe that all persons, whether clergy or laity, have been called by God for specific ministries, for which we want to prepare them. The network training experience should help clarify the learner’s sense of call and solidify the person’s commitment to church planting. The ultimate goal of the curriculum: to equip laypersons with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be United Methodist church planters.²²

²⁰ "UMC Pathone," UMC Pathone, Lay Missionary Planting Network, accessed October 24, 2012, <http://path1.org/lmpn>.

²¹ Acts 4:13

²² "UMC Pathone," UMC Pathone, Lay Missionary Planting Network, accessed October 24, 2012, <http://path1.org/lmpn>.

The curriculum is done in ten sessions to equip laity in the basics of church planting, scripture, doctrine, and Wesleyan theology. The hope is to deploy people and teams as needed when a new church is ready to form. Also, the curriculum is translated into Spanish and is soon to be translated into other languages as well. As the United States enters another time of “golden immigration,” reaching out to a diversity of ethnic groups presents enormous opportunities. As mentioned previously, the growth of both The Kentucky Annual Conference and The Greater New Jersey Conference was a direct result of church planting. However, the communities that were targeted were not only Anglos, but also growing immigrant communities such as Haitians, Brazilians, Hispanics, Korean-Americans, and people from various African countries. The LMPN would allow people who may not have a seminary degree, let alone a college or high school diploma to be engaged in significant Kingdom work.²³ This is reminiscent of early Methodism, As George Hunter points out:

Eighteenth-century Methodists were an entrepreneurial laity; lay people invented many ministries to serve people in their community. In some communities, lay Methodists gathered children to give them the only organized education they might ever experience. Lay people started most of the new classes and societies. Lay people brought Methodist Christianity across the Atlantic. And when they wrote to Wesley, "Send some preachers to help us," they did not ask Wesley, "Send some preachers to do all the ministry for us!"²⁴

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ 297-300. George G. Hunter, *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), Kindle edition.

This not only sounds like early Methodism but even more so like early Christianity. In this day and age people who are called into vocational ministry cannot afford to take out a significant amount of debt to go to college or receive a seminary degree.

The LMPN is paving the way for glimpses of a promising future for the UMC, despite the denomination's overall decline. Lay people will have a bigger role to play in leading churches, especially if/when the financial tsunami plays out, and churches will not be able to afford to pay ordained elders their increasing equitable compensations along with providing benefits that include sky-rocketing insurance costs, housing allowances, pensions, and other investments. The UMC must return to a movement, as Bruce Larson points out where laity is more entrusted with the ministry as it is in other parts of the world where the church is actually growing such as in China.²⁵

Another way laity can be more involved is in the appointment process. Larger churches needing a new pastor often have a strong lay presence, with the laity in positions to voice their interests. Bishops and District Superintendents usually take these concerns very seriously during consultations. As Lovett Weems suggests, the same process can be applied across the board, and doing so will increase the involvement and trust of laity. This will also give more incentives for those pastors who are bearing fruit in their ministries.²⁶ This could potentially shake things up so that

²⁵ Ibid., 321.

²⁶ 864. Lovett H. Weems, *Focus: The Real Challenges That Face the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), Kindle edition.

clergy and churches are matched up based on the gifts and graces of the individual minister and the specific needs/vision of a congregation. This would hopefully result in doing away with the “moving up in the system” type of mentality, based on time and service.

Many of the budgetary cuts that happen are for the UMC church to live within its financial means and to experience longer-term sustainability. The temptation is to adopt a survival mode mentality instead of a thriving one. Weems suggests that this financial baseline reset could be an opportunity for a new and focused vitality. Weems’ main suggestion starts with reallocating funds for new church development. Annual conferences need to reallocate funds from programs that are ineffective and not working to programs that advance the future of the church. With all of the assets that many annual conferences have, it would be beneficial for them to liquidize some by selling off facilities of churches that have closed and using the funds for a new work or restarting churches. An example of this type of work is happening in the Virginia Annual Conference. They call it the *Elijah Church*. The Elijah Church is helping to renew struggling congregations who are desperate enough to make a change in outreach and effectiveness. After the church and conference agree to a need for change they together begin to explore options such as:

- (1) A renewed vision for revitalization
- (2) Relocation,
- (3) Merger with another church and relocation to a new site, and

(4) Merger with another congregation using one of the current facilities²⁷

Elijah Churches take everything they have to invest in something new by following the biblical example of Elijah giving Elisha a double portion of his spirit by passing on the mantle. The Elijah Churches are recognized and celebrated at the Virginia Annual Conference for their past efforts and willingness to invest in the future by either:

- (1) Continuing while permitting a new ministry to begin in their building,
- (2) Joining another church and giving the building to reach new populations, or
- (3) Joining another church and investing the church assets in new churches.²⁸

Elijah Church is simply one of many ways to let a dying congregation pass away in a dignifying way while birthing life to something new. This is an example many Annual Conferences throughout Methodism can emulate.

Weems has another method to reset the financial baseline of the UMC. It has to do with eliminating the equitable salary and having no minimum salary. This is in part due to the fact that a majority of UMC churches are being served by part-time and licensed local pastors because the number of local churches that can support the salary package of an ordained elder or deacon is diminishing rapidly. In the future, if equitable salaries and minimum salaries are not eliminated or lowered it can prove to be

²⁷ Ibid., 455.

²⁸ Ibid., 458.

catastrophic across the board for the UMC.²⁹ As many annual conferences are making tough decisions to do ministry within their financial means, Kentucky, is lowering its budget for the first-time in its history. Bishop Lindsey Davis said, "Across our Annual Conference we have experienced over \$300,000 in salary reduction as a result of congregations reducing salary support to our clergy. This fact alone makes it inevitable that many of our pastors will move at a salary decrease. While these reductions are not fair to our clergy they are part of our current reality."³⁰ A South Eastern Jurisdictional Annual Conference has never experienced such a reduction however this has been the norm in the Northern part of the country for such annual conferences as the New England Annual Conference where a majority of pastors, even ordained, serve multiple charges and the largest UMC congregation in this conference that spans five states only has 150 in worship attendance on a Sunday morning.³¹

Asbury Theological Seminary has taken the role of church planting to the next level by instituting a M.A. in church planting with a \$5-million gift that was given to initiate it. The gift was given to follow Asbury's 2023 Strategic Plan that anticipates 40% of its graduates at that point will participate in church planting.³² The Church Planting

²⁹ Ibid., 501.

³⁰ Lindsey Davis, "2014 Appointments," e-mail message to author, April 10, 2014. Over 50 clergy were called on this day to be notified they were receiving new appointments.

³¹ Rick McKinley, "New England Annual Conference," telephone interview by author, March 30, 2014. Rick is the New Church Development Director for the New England Annual Conference of The UMC.

³² "Asbury Seminary Receives... \$5 Million Gift to Launch Church Planting," Asbury Theological Seminary, November 12, 2013, accessed April 15, 2014, <https://www.asburyseminary.edu/asbury->

program will provide a 100% tuition scholarship to those selected. Asbury describes the need for a focus on church planting by stating:

“New churches are a vital evangelism tool. As the global church continues to grow, there is a desperate need for trained church planters with skills in personal evangelism, leadership, and organizational theory. Churches still need to be planted in North America, and because of the changing demographics of communities, church planting has become a cross-cultural task. The Master of Arts in Church Planting will train students in the theological, theoretical, and practical literatures of church planting. Students will receive practical experience in planting churches through experiential learning, and will learn the art of intercultural understanding and contextualization. Students who complete this course of study will be equipped to plant churches in various cultures to which God calls them.”³³

The level of trust between laity and clergy could be greatly impacted, in a positive way, by not only modifying the appointment system with selection of clergy but also limiting the itinerancy process. The way the UMC understands itinerancy is not what it was originally meant to be. As George Hunter describes it, the church planters of early Methodism were circuit-riding pastors who targeted territories instead of being appointed to churches.³⁴ Hunter recalls, “In frontier America circuit-riding pastors were not appointed to churches; they were appointed to territories. Circuit riders planted churches to reach the people in the communities, and everywhere, first

seminary-receives-commitment-5-million-gift-launch-church-planting-initiative/. Asbury's 2023 Strategic Plan is a 60-page document with 10 main points encompassing it.

³³ "M.A. in Church Planting - Asbury Theological Seminary," Asbury Theological Seminary, accessed April 15, 2014, <https://www.asburyseminary.edu/academics/degrees/master-of-arts/m-a-in-church-planting/>.

³⁴ George G. Hunter, *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 954.

generation Methodist laity reached far more people than the preachers did.”³⁵ Even Wesley himself made the distinction of the different roles of people involved in ministry, which sheds some light on what was meant for itinerancy in his sermon entitled, “The Ministerial Office”:

But I do not find that ever the office of an Evangelist was the same with that of a Pastor, frequently called a Bishop. He presided over the flock, and administered the sacraments: The former assisted him, and preached the Word, either in one or more congregations. I cannot prove from any part of the New Testament, or from any author of the three first centuries, that the office of an evangelist gave any man a right to act as a Pastor or Bishop. I believe these offices were considered as quite distinct from each other till the time of Constantine.³⁶

Wesley made the distinction that traveling preachers were not pastors. The circuit riders would come every few weeks, gather crowds, and preach the Word. However, it was the role of the stationary local elders and laity to invest in the long-term growth of Methodism. According to Donald Haynes, the UMC has become so bound to itinerancy that it has obtained a reputation as “the church that moves its preachers a lot,” instead of being known by its theology and Wesleyan distinctive.³⁷

Perhaps the role of ministers and ordained elders must model John Perkins’ Christian Community Development Association (CCDA). If clergy could be rooted for

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ John Wesley, “Global Ministries,” Sermon 115, John Wesley Sermons, accessed October 25, 2012, <http://www.umcmmission.org/Find-Resources/Global-Worship-and-Spiritual-Growth/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-115-The-Ministerial-Office>.

³⁷ Donald W. Haynes, “The United Methodist Portal,” A The United Methodist Portal, April 3, 2008, Commentary, accessed October 25, 2012, <http://www.umportal.org/article.asp?id=3302>.

a significant amount of time in a given geographical area, the relationship between the clergy and church would be strengthened, as would be the church's relationship with the community. Perkins has three rules for a significant ministry to take place, which he calls "The Three Rs." They are relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution.³⁸ First, Perkins argues that to effectively minister to the poor one must relocate into their neighborhoods. The same is true for those clergy who want to reach a given geographical area or target focus for their local churches. They should relocate into a specific neighborhood of people they want to reach, get to know the people, and build relationships. These processes can take years, but are well worth the results and efforts. Essentially, relocation is incarnational ministry at its core. As Perkins points out, "This is why relocation, the first of the three Rs, is so important. An outsider can seldom know the needs of the community well enough to know how to best respond to them. Rarely if ever can an outsider effectively lead the community in finding creative solutions to its own problems. That kind of leadership, the kind of leadership that empowers people, comes from insiders."³⁹ Perkins believes relocation at its best is done when one becomes an insider in a community instead of an outsider trying to respond to the given needs of a community. Insiders are people who can empower others.⁴⁰

³⁸ 118. John Perkins, *With Justice for All: A Strategy for Community Development* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2007), Kindle edition.

³⁹ Ibid., 654.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Relocation is essential to making a lasting impact on a community and understanding its assets, potentials, and problems.

The second R is reconciliation. All Christians are called to be bridges in reconciling others to God. Specifically, it is imperative for clergy not just to relocate into a given neighborhood or area, but to move into significant relationships with the hope of engaging others in the ministry of reconciliation, as the Apostle Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”⁴¹ The key to this reconciliation is that it is not only between God and humanity but within humanity as well.

The third R is redistribution. Redistribution is a tangible way of loving one’s neighbor as oneself. This involves sacrifice, maybe it even means being willing to live less comfortably and placing ministry ahead of having a large a salary. As Perkins believes, redistribution is sharing more and committing to empower people who are living on the margins in a community.⁴² Perkins argues, “As a first step toward redistribution, then, we must commit ourselves to living with less in order that we can

⁴¹ This is a pivotal verse used for reconciliation between God and humanity.

⁴² George G. Hunter, *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 1710.

share more. This process of finding ways to use less can be a lifelong family adventure. Yet living more simply will not in itself make much difference in the lives of the poor. We must find ways to use what we save to empower the needy.”⁴³ Jesus said the poor would always be in our midst. The reality is that poverty is not just a lack of financial resources, but also the lack of godly relationships to help connect others to the reconciling power of Christ’s love. Everybody is powerless without God. Redistribution is practicing holiness in a social context.

The United Methodist Church can once again return to being a grassroots movement, by investing more in clergy and laity with the common mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."⁴⁴ The long-lasting decline of the UMC in attendance, membership, professions of faith, baptisms, and younger people with an increase in expenses can create desperation for revival and renewal. It can ultimately move the UMC from a hunger and survival mode to once again thriving in a new way by starting a new work. The harvest is the largest it has ever been in the United States, making it the third largest mission field in the world. To reach the nearly 200 million unchurched people in the U.S., the UMC must redefine the relationship between clergy and laity, and also what it means to do ministry in a changing culture.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "Mission Statement," in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, 2008. (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), 87.

⁴⁵ George G. Hunter, *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 489.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

My proposed treatment hypothesis is designed to show how Embrace Church can be a case study within mainline denominationalism as a seedbed for training missional leaders through bi-vocational and incarnational missionary methods. One of the overall purposes of this project is to develop a new model for a ministerial order that can be an example for the UMC. The current roles of elders are no longer viable in the changing context of the U.S. Current approaches to itinerancy and finances are the primary factors detrimental to this new proposed approach. This new model would allow for UMC ministry to continue with fewer financial obligations and more flexibility.

Embrace Church is one congregation with three different communities in an urban context. As a chartered UMC congregation, the UMC has placed their financial restraints on Embrace Church, and these restraints have become amplified to the point that the Church currently cannot financially support its operations. For many suburban and well-established churches, as they grow in attendees their budgets grow. However, for urban churches like Embrace Church, as they see numerical growth, they also increase their expenses but not their expected revenue. This leaves little to no money for essential

staff and ministry. This problematic scenario has called for the Embrace Church staff and membership to become better stewards with their resources and to find ways to do ministry inexpensively, such as sharing the pastoral staff load.

Expected Results

Through a team approach, the Embrace Church pastoral staff under my direction expects that the three communities that make up the church will be vital. Vitality will be measured in areas such as attendance, baptism, and professions of faith. Embrace Church will be measured against similar size congregations within the UMC in Lexington, Kentucky to have an applicable sample pool. We seek to do this by keeping cost down and by keeping more money flowing into the ministry. The pastoral team will meet weekly for accountability, support, sermon planning, and fellowship. Figure 5 shows all the specifics summary of data.

Figure 5.

Summary of Bi-vocational Ministry

PASTORS	<u>ROLES</u>	<u>MEASURES</u>	DEFINED <u>OUTCOMES</u>
Rosario Picardo	Lead Pastor	Professions of Faiths	Sense of Calling
Chuck Gutenson	Downtown Pastor	Baptisms	Community
Bryan Langlands	Georgetown Pastor	Attendance	Blessing
Joshua Wynn	Gathering Pastor		Passion
Justin Barringer	Outreach Pastor		

The research is examining the effectiveness of allowing flexibility to make a missional order that allows and even promotes ministers in the UMC to be bi-vocational. The pastors of Embrace Church provided themselves for an extensive time period to measure how all five of them held other ways of earning income from occupations besides being ministers so that the church would have more finances to devote to ministry. The research looked to discover how ministers could devote themselves to the workforce while leading vital congregations. The measures of effectiveness are of course overall worship attendance which can be defined as the number of persons who attend a given service, professions of faith, which give record to people who accept Christ, and baptism, people who are initiated into The Church. The measures all equate to vitality, which exhibits how Embrace Church is thriving at reaching people along with practicing stewardship by having a smaller budget than all the churches within the UMC in Lexington, Kentucky. Embrace Church has proven how bi-vocational ministry can be a viable option.

Research Methods

A qualitative methodology research approach will be heavily used, which will allow for a case study of the five Embrace Church pastoral staff. A qualitative case study will be conducted through interviews with individuals and colleagues at Embrace Church, who are bi-vocational pastors and urban missionaries. This case study will be combined with narrative research; the narrative research will consist of obtaining information about the views and values of the case study participants of Embrace Church. This research

seeks to measure the overall vitality of missional leaders through a complex of growth metrics that will be compared to the denominational average in a given district.¹

I will be a researcher and participant in the study. I and the other case study participants will meet, pray, plan ministry activities, and support one another. The five participants will keep track of their attendance, professions of faith, and baptisms at Embrace Church. The interpretation of the data will help give clarity as to the effectiveness of the proposed missional model in comparison to the denomination averages.

Project Design

The project design began as five of the pastors at Embrace Church have voluntarily decided to become bi-vocational ministers. This project will follow their personal journeys as they seek to balance church, work, and family life. The settings are the four communities under Embrace Church that all have a different context from each other. On a weekly basis the pastors will meet for two hours for a time of prayer, accountability, vision, and long-range planning. Each pastor overseeing a specific community of Embrace Church will have to report their numbers in terms of weekly attendance, professions of faith, and baptisms.

¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 130-131.

Data-Analysis Process

As the researcher engages a majority of their research in regards to qualitative data regarding the bi-vocational pastors, it will become particularly crucial how the data is analyzed. The data that will mainly be analyzed when it comes to the pastors of Embrace Church is narrative data. Narrative data comes in many forms, but for this research, it will come in interview style and support group as the pastors meet together on a weekly basis.²

In addition to qualitative data, there will also be quantitative statistics added in the mix as Embrace Church is compared to the UMC churches of similar attendance in the city of Lexington to show the effectiveness of a bi-vocational model by measuring Embrace's rank of with baptisms and professions of faith while keeping a lean budget and showing financial stewardship.

Validity

The goal of the qualitative research is to prove this study to be true and certain in regards to its findings.³ The method used to prove this validity is triangulation. This will require recording data, conducting interviews and comparisons of a sample pool of churches.

² Ibid., 13.

³ Ibid., 149.

Credibility

The participants in this study are bi-vocational ministers. Rosario Picardo and Bryan Langlands are ordained elders given special permission to participate in being able to work a secondary job. Rosario is the lead pastor of Embrace Church, which is one congregation, made up of four communities. Chuck Gutenson is a licensed local pastor in the UMC and Joshua Wynn and Justin Barringer are staff people who also hold jobs and raise financial support. None of these pastors are paid fulltime by the church and receive income from multiple streams.⁴

The participants were encouraged to work as much as they could not only at Embrace Church but also at their other places of employment. The participants happen to all be male because no bi-vocational females were available on staff, as the only other employee is actually a female who is a fulltime employee of Embrace Church.

Transferability

At the outset of the research there were some assumptions made by the researcher. One was that mainline denominations such as the UMC are declining numerically in categories that will change their future as they know it, such as not having as many full-time ordained elders because the cost will be difficult for the local church to afford to pay them. Therefore, bi-vocational ministry will become the norm in the UMC in years to come as they decline. Another assumption was that bi-vocational pastors who are ministering at a church could be an effective witness in the world by showing

⁴ Ibid., 192.

parishioners and unchurched people that ministry is a labor of love. The third assumption was the stereotype that bi-vocational pastors may not be as effective at leading vital congregations as fulltime ministers who can make more money and devote all of their work hours to the local church.

Triangulation

The type of triangulation that will be used for this research project is theory triangulation. Typically theory triangulation involves professionals outside the field, but this is not necessarily mandatory to show effectiveness if the individuals are in different positions. Since the individuals in this study hold different titles and positions, the expectation is that they will draw the same conclusion thus providing validity to the research. Data is compiled with the four different communities under Embrace Church in regards to attendance, increased professions of faith, and increased baptisms, while keeping budget costs lower, while being compared to sample churches of similar attendance in the same setting, which is UMC congregations in the city of Lexington, Kentucky. After the data is compiled, it will be shared with each individual to triangulate the information to see how they feel about it and what conclusions they draw from it.

Dependability

In regards to research it becomes nearly impossible to control the environment and context for which the study takes place. There are many variables that can change,

especially when it comes to leadership in any given local church whether it is personal, sickness, and family circumstances. It is important for the researcher to keep up to date on individuals who are involved in this bi-vocational case study to monitor for any changes that could affect the research.

Confirmability

The researcher believes that the results of the qualitative study research will be confirmed by the individuals who are participating in it. The researcher will keep track of the positive and negative experiences that the bi-vocational pastors have throughout the case study. Once the study is complete then a data audit will reveal the effectiveness of the overall project.

Project Timeline

2012

June 4	Bi-vocational pastor, Chuck Gutenson comes on staff
September 3	Lead Pastor, Rosario Picardo becomes bi-vocational
October 11	Bi-vocational elder, Bryan Langlands begins Georgetown Missional Community

2013

January 7	Urban Missionary, Josh Wynn becomes pastoral leader of The Gathering
April 7	Chuck Gutenson becomes downtown community campus - pastor
May 20	Urban Missionary, Justin Barringer joins staff
June-Dec	Monthly incubator 8-hour meetings
June-Dec	Interviews will be conducted

Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions

John W. Creswell states that in qualitative interviews the researcher conducts face-to-face, telephone, or focus group interviews, and each group should contain six to eight interviewees. A few unstructured and open-ended questions should be asked with the intent to elicit views and opinions.⁵ The following four open-ended questions will be asked in this project:

- Why have you decided to come on staff at Embrace Church as a bi-vocational pastor?
- How has making this decision impacted your life, your family, and Embrace Church?
- What type of growth have you seen as a result of being on staff at Embrace Church?
- What challenges have you faced as a bi-vocational pastor?

A definition of terms is necessary to define what constitutes a bi-vocational pastor. For this study, a bi-vocational pastor is one who works a job(s) outside of Embrace Church and receives little or no financial salary from the church or who may raise financial support from benefactors outside of Embrace Church's context. In the course of the interviews for the qualitative analysis there were four common patterns involving the bi-vocational pastors of Embrace Church as seen in figure 6.

⁵ Ibid., 181.

Figure 6.

Common Patterns

CATERGORICAL PATTERN	DEFINITION
Sense of Calling	They are each on staff as bi-vocational because they feel that God has called them to do ministry in this way.
Community	There is a sense that community (with other staff and other church people) has been the greatest thing for accountability in these pastors' lives. Also, community plays a big role in each of the success stories that they share (the person who is lonely or outcast is now surrounded and a part of the community).
Blessing	Each pastor expressed that being on staff has been an overall blessing in spite of difficulties with finances, lack of time, etc. You get a sense that each would make the same decision to be a bi-vocational pastor if given the opportunity to make the choice again.
Passion	Passion for ministry and the people they shepherd comes through clearly in these interviews.

Sense of Calling

The common pattern of calling is an important theme in this particular study, throughout the Scriptural characters selected with Paul and Amos, and historically with the early Methodist Circuit Riders. The bi-vocational pastors of Embrace Church would

not engage in the work they do without feeling a compelling call by God. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism recognized two facets of calling to ministry. The first is an *inner call*, which is confirmed through the gifts and graces for ministry that one is given. It is the Holy Spirit stirring in an individual as God speaks to their heart much like the Prophet Jeremiah who had a compelling message to share and said that he needed to share it because “it was like fire shut up in his bones.” A second necessary facet is the *outward call*, which comes from outside an individual through the church. People in the community of faith affirm a person in their giftings and encourage them to pursue and exercise the giftings in the community.⁶

Embrace Church’s bi-vocational ministers are a blend of how both the work of the clergy and laity can work in a harmonious way. Wesley’s understanding of ministry influenced the rest of the Wesleyan tradition by the belief that the ordained ministry was apart from a preaching ministry, which Wesley believed anybody could pursue. Early Methodism expected their laity and preachers to adhere to an exemplary life with works of piety and spiritual disciplines. Wesley did not come up with Methodism to be a separate faction but to be a renewal group of sorts remaining under the larger umbrella of the Church of England. Wesley deeply cared for the spiritual well-being of all under the care of early Methodism. Wesley’s concern was over the need for Methodists to receive the sacraments. It is was because of this pastoral care that Wesley was persuaded to

⁶ Dennis Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 53.

ordain Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke to ordain ministers in order for them to administer the sacraments.⁷

Ultimately Wesley's call for renewal within the Church of England burdened his heart for outreach in his context. As Methodism grew and expanded to the United States, Wesley knew the context was going to change and the approach was going to as well. It was because of this that he ordained Asbury and Coke. Likewise, many of the early circuit riders traveled a great distance because of the calling they felt to reach new people for the Gospel. Early Methodism was a church planting movement to its core and Embrace Church is living within that tradition as God is rising up bi-vocational minister to carry out the task.

The Gathering Pastor of Embrace Church, Joshua Wynn shares the following about calling:

“First, I felt God calling me to be on staff at Embrace as an Urban Missionary position, specifically at The Gathering...to be the pastor of The Gathering. Second, along with that calling, God had given me a love for the people and the vision of Embrace. In a lot of ways, I was that hurt, broken person that we talk about, and God has definitely done some amazing work in my own life.”⁸

Outreach Pastor of Embrace Church, Justin Barringer, mentioned calling as a top reason as to why he decided to be a bi-vocational minister at Embrace Church. Barringer said,

“My wife and I both felt that this place is where the call was. If it's the place you are called, you should go regardless whether or not you got all the plans worked out. I think part of the reason we

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Joshua Wynn, "Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions," interview.

discerned that this is the place we are called is that the stuff that we saw and still see is the sort of stuff going on that we believe is very Kingdom-oriented. Also, specifically one of the methods we are interested in is a more general call in terms of living in a neighborhood where there is poverty.”⁹

The Georgetown Missional Pastor of Embrace Church, Bryan Langlands, affirmed the reason he wanted to join Embrace’s staff was a call to be a part of a new church start. Langlands explained,

“I felt like it was a calling from the Lord to be involved in a church plant, to a new church start, a new faith community. That opportunity presented itself, and I had some conversations with you, being involved with Embrace these past couple of years. I think part of it was a conversation that we had a few years ago about that vision God had given you about different outposts of Embrace in different parts of Lexington and maybe up in Georgetown. And we started last year first talking about maybe calling it Embrace-Georgetown or something like that to make that connection with the church really visible and apparent. You know, just a prompting of the Lord to do that. I think it is a phase of apostolic ministry of being sent out and starting new things that the Lord has called me into.”¹⁰

The interesting part of the bi-vocational ministers of Embrace Church is that the lead pastor, Rosario Picardo, and Georgetown Missional pastor, Bryan Langlands are the only ordained elders. Chuck Gutenson is a part-time local pastor and Joshua Wynn and Justin Barringer are staff members. Picardo believes that part of his ordained ministry is to start a renewal movement within the UMC. When a Methodist minister is admitted into full connection, they make a covenant, which is something that is not self-seeking but instead sacrificial. This is a reminder of John Wesley’s Covenant Service when it is

⁹ Justin Barringer, “Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions,” interview.

¹⁰ Bryan Langlands, “Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions,” interview.

said that, “We take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience... We are no longer our own but thine.¹¹”

Community

The segment of calling that is often neglected is that communal aspect of it. Embrace Church’s bi-vocational pastors have a sense of being called into community together for mutual accountability. This has been involved in meeting weekly for eight to ten hours a month in prayer, scripture reading, accountability, and encouragement. All the pastors surveyed said there is a strong sense that community (with other staff and other church people), and this has been the greatest thing for accountability in these pastors’ lives. Also, community plays a big role in each of the success stories that they share (the person who is lonely or outcast is now surrounded and a part of the community).

In terms of accountability there would be “missional accountability” items that each staff member would be assigned to do. The researcher would define missional accountability as a task or duty that would be either relational or administrative that needed to be accomplished to further the mission of Embrace Church. In addition to the missional accountability items, a reminder email would be sent to all staff members.

The reality of having a majority of staff as bi-vocational pastors is that their time is limited between the balance of family, children, finances, and working additional jobs or raising support. The missional accountability is one aid for the mission to be

¹¹ Dennis Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 18.

accomplished, and the other is a weekly productivity report.¹² The weekly productivity report served as a source of accountability for the bi-vocational pastors and also a way for the researcher and lead pastor, Rosario Picardo to monitor progress. It included weekly accomplishments, a list of ongoing projects, contacts made in the week, questions or concerns, and prayer requests.

The community component that the bi-vocational pastor's experienced in their time together was patterned after the Wesleyan band meetings. The accountability factor was seen more clearly in bands because of how much smaller the band meetings were consisting of about six to eight members where leadership was selected from within the group. This can be seen in Wesley's own life where intimate interaction was played out in the Holy Club, in Georgia with the Sunday afternoon gatherings, the Fetter Lane Society, and then the band meetings of early Methodism. The idea of the band meeting was the distinguishing factor between the ministries of Wesley and George Whitefield. Even though Whitefield was considered to be a more dynamic preacher than Wesley, his efforts did not provide a long lasting discipleship. Wesley believed that the most effective way to follow up his field preaching was by establishing discipleship opportunities such as the bands. The band meeting was said to be Wesley's favorite meeting, though the class meeting provided the instructional mode for early Methodists. The original mode of Methodism was the band meeting, and it was from Wesley's quest to perfect it that others

¹² See Appendix A

sprang forth.¹³ The band meeting was elevated to the middle level in the system, while the rise of the class meeting in 1742 became the entry group to supplant the band.¹⁴ The band meeting was not mandatory of Methodism but was strongly encouraged by the societies and class meetings.¹⁵

The bands were organized by separating men from women, married and singles, kids and adults. The basis of the *Rules of the Bands* was on James 5:16, “Confess your faults to another, and pray for one another that you may be healed.”¹⁶ The activity was to meet once a week, come punctually at the hour appointed, begin with singing or prayer, and speak the true state of their souls: faults and temptations since the last meeting and if they had victory over it by sharing how they resisted it.¹⁷ A leader was to speak their state first and then go around the room; however, if a person did not share much the leader would ask them more pointed questions.¹⁸ Bands aided participants in striving toward sanctification by providing a safe environment where sins and temptations could be shared without reserve but in all honesty. The intense confessional aspect of the band meetings made them unique from the class meeting and societies, where a smaller group made it

¹³ Dennis Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 112.

¹⁴ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1997), 115.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁶ KJV

¹⁷ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 9: “The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design,”* ed. Rupert E. Davis, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989): 272.

¹⁸ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1997), 118.

more attractive to divulge a person's shadow side. This allowed band members to become close knit groups because they discovered that sharing struggles, advice, and prayer helped in the bonding process.¹⁹

A return to early Methodism involving commitment to areas of discipline would help shed light on today's concerns of the small group movement. A step in the right direction for today's small groups would be to make a return to Wesley's day where early Methodists adhered to a set of practices known as the *General Rules of the United Societies*, which helped them in maintaining their relationship with God and their neighbor. The three rules of discipline consisted of

1. "By doing nor harm, by avoiding evil in every kind...2. By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity doing good of every possible sort...to all...: to their bodies...; to their souls...3. By attending all the ordinances of God. Such are: the public worship of God; the ministry of the word, either read or expounded; the Supper of the Lord; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; and fasting or abstinence."²⁰

Though each rule has specific rules under each one they must be viewed in a holistic manner. The first rule emphasizes how one's actions must reflect reverence to both God and neighbor.²¹ The second rule focuses on Christian formation and evangelism involving the soul and social concerns having to do with the physical body which are "works of

¹⁹ Henry H. Knight, *Eight Life-Enriching Practices of United Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 82.

²⁰ John Wesley, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Upon-Tyne," in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9, Rupert E. Davis, ed., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 270.

²¹ John Wesley, "Directions Given to the Band-Societies," in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9, Rupert E. Davis, ed., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 273.

mercy.²²” The “works of piety” encompassed in the third rule makes mention of our love for God through the overlapping of the means of grace.²³

To become “disciplined” in the sense of the word for early Methodists was to leave behind their former pre-Christian lives. It was to turn away from activities that would place a wedge between one’s relationship with God and with their neighbor. Such activities would include profanity, quarreling, gossiping, lying, greed, and fulfilling selfish desires. The behavior, which was encouraged of early Methodists, was to take care of the poor and down trodden of society, to care for the social outcasts by encouraging others through the gospel to live a life of holiness. This type of behavior of early Methodists was not a “social club” mentality where group meetings were only about the participants but were intended to bring the participant to grow deeper spiritually by living an inward and outward Christian life that interacted with the society in which they lived in.²⁴

The Gathering Pastor at Embrace Church, Joshua Wynn, attributes his success for ministry as a bi-vocational pastor because of staff meeting accountability. In Joshua’s own words he says,

Community is key for accountability. So, my time spent with Chuck on a weekly basis and my time spent with everyone else at the staff meetings helps me stay accountable. The progress reports help me stay accountable because I can look through and see what I have done and what I haven’t. And having someone help you is

²² Ibid., 274.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Henry H. Knight, *Eight Life-Enriching Practices of United Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 81.

very beneficial and helps holds you accountable. When you feel that you are doing it all by yourself, it's hard to stay accountable.²⁵

Justin Barringer, Outreach Pastor of Embrace Church says of community and accountability:

That's been a huge help for us. Just having community around us that encourages us, questions us, and prays for us. I feel that we could be doing a lot of good things and really easily get way off track if we didn't have the community. I don't think that we would even try if we didn't have the community. A lot of the tasks are not me doing a task; it's us doing a task. So, naturally, since we are doing it in community, even if one person is heading it up, accountability is built in.²⁶

Blessing

In the case study research of the bi-vocational pastors of Embrace Church, a third significant pattern noted was that of blessing. Each pastor expressed that being on staff has been an overall blessing in spite of difficulties with finances and lack of time. You get a sense that each would make the same decision to be a bi-vocational pastor if given the opportunity to make the choice again. The comments below are in response to the question, "What challenges have you faced as a bi-vocational pastor?" at Embrace Church in particular. Their responses are below.

Oh, the usual--too little money for all we want to do, difficult folks who function passive aggressively, a great weakness in churches, I think. Processes can be slow and unwieldy. ~ Chuck Gutenson

Well, it's been tough, but for most of my marriage we haven't been in great financial standing since we were in China and I was a student for most of my marriage. And for me I feel like I'm doing

²⁵ Joshua Wynn, "Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions," interview.

²⁶ Justin Barringer, "Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions," interview.

the stuff that I'm supposed to be doing for the most part, so that's been very good. But I think it's been difficult because last month we weren't able to meet our budget. ~ Justin Barringer

Yeah, fundraising has been a challenge, obviously, but you know God has helped me with that. I think the hardest challenge for me is with the people I serve, that I really do life with day in and day out, there is a lot of neediness and a lot of brokenness. And there is a lot of hurt and a lot of pain. On Monday nights, as soon as I walk out of my office, there is someone waiting to tell me another heartbreaking story. And so the challenge for me is as a pastor to be that shepherd but at the same time, I'm sorry I'm using very Christian language but I don't know how else to say, but the challenge is to be that empathetic and sympathetic person that wants to hurt with them. That wants to experience what they are experiencing on some level. But the other side knows when enough is enough to separate yourself so that it doesn't begin to hurt you, if that makes sense. That is one of the biggest challenges that I have faced. There are days where you feel drained because the issues that people are facing are so big, and sometimes you feel like you can do so little, and it makes you question things like is love really enough sometimes. And so that is one of the main challenges for me. Learning to set boundaries and not always pick up the phone when someone is out of food. And then also, another challenge is discernment and one of the things you and me have talked about is that there are people who will waste your time or want to take up all your time. And I have a lot of that with some of the people I am in relationship with. Sometimes they will want to talk to me about the same thing over and over again for two to three hours at a time. Sometimes that can be distracting when there is someone else who really, really is hurting or in really major need or needs to be comforted or needs to be helped. So discernment is a challenge. Let's see. What else are challenges? I think sometimes you have challenges with just working with a team. Although it is a great community, there are different ideas and different visions that God has created that has definitely made us think differently or perhaps our backgrounds where we have come from make us think in different ways and sometimes there are conflicts or different feelings that go along with that. And so that can always be a challenge, but at the same time it can be a huge blessing because there were times where I didn't really think holistically about something and maybe Leticia or you have said something that has made me think differently about something. So at the same

time it is a challenge. Iron sharpens iron, right? But it is a challenge, but at the same time challenges should be considered places to grow rather than negative things. I don't think challenges should ever be considered something that is negative but should be considered something that is positive because it means that there is more growth there that can happen. ~ Joshua Wynn

It's been a blessing overall. But it has been a challenge in terms of time. We have three young children, so time is one of our most precious commodities. There have been moments and weeks where the responsibilities of being in leadership with this missional community where that's hurt more or felt like a sacrifice just because it's time-pinch. But overall, we are trying. For Amanda (an ordained pastor as well) and I, you know our primary way of doing it is that we try not to compartmentalize but we see our fundamental ministry as our family ministry. And so together as a family, we are living our mission together and so sometimes that means as a family we are at momma's church doing stuff. Sometimes that means we're at daddy's church doing stuff. Sometimes that means we are hosting college students in our home. But the primary thing is our family ministry, trying to be on mission together as a family. My daughters...I've been talking to them about what it means to be missionaries for Jesus in their schools and playgrounds. And so, really it's been one more opportunity to be a family on mission together through the things that the Movement has been doing. Realistically, when we have had our public worship gatherings, because we have had them Sunday nights, my family hasn't always been able to be involved. Sometimes, my wife has Sunday night meetings at her church. We have a one-year-old so sometimes I have her there while I'm also trying to lead. If my wife can't be there, then that's pretty challenging. I've asked other people to help out with that, but overall, it's been a blessing. ~ Bryan Langlands²⁷

The researcher and participant in the study, Rosario Picardo is an ordained elder in the UMC. As well as being a lead pastor of Embrace Church, Picardo also works for the Lexington District of the UMC as a New Church Development Coordinator and is founder of Picardo Coaching LLC. Picardo is one of the lowest paid ordained elder in the

²⁷ "Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions," interviews.

Kentucky Annual Conference (KAC) by choice because of missional reasons. Picardo's total compensation package is roughly around \$48,000. Chuck Gutenson is a part-time local Pastor with Embrace Church and receives \$12,000 annually for overseeing the downtown community. Joshua Wynn is The Gathering Pastor and receives no compensation from Embrace Church. Wynn raises support as an urban missionary along with doing odd jobs such as home repairs and lawn care. Justin Barringer, Outreach Pastor of Embrace Church, receives no compensation from the church. Barringer also works at a non-profit, The Lexington Rescue Mission. Bryan Langlands, Pastor of the Georgetown Missional Community receives no compensation from the church. Langlands is a fulltime campus minister with Georgetown College. The total budgetary impact for Embrace Church due these five bi-vocational pastors is \$60,000. This is saving Embrace Church thousands of dollars since the minimum compensation package for ordained elders in KAC is \$71,031 (as seen in figure 7) and average compensation package for ordained elders is \$101,780 for one minister (as seen in figure 8).

Figure 7.

2013 minimum compensation package for ordained elders in Kentucky

Package Category	Cost
Base Salary	\$34,195
Parsonage or Housing Allowance	\$12,000
Utilities and other allowances	\$4,000
Retirement and life insurance contributions	\$7,576
Health Insurance Provided	\$13,260
Total package: \$71,031	

Figure 8.

2013 Average Compensation for ordained elders in KAC

Package Category	Cost
Base Salary	\$61,055
Parsonage or Housing Allowance	\$12,000** **(This is minimum allowed — the average wasn't listed)
Utilities and other allowances	\$4,000

Retirement and life insurance contributions	\$11,981
Health Insurance Provided	\$12,744
Total package: \$101,780 (assuming minimum-level housing and utilities allowance)	

Embrace Church has found a creative way to maintain its attendance, entrepreneurial spirit, and the needs of the congregations with these bi-vocational pastors. Embrace is paving a future reality for most UMC churches where the money is running out. It is not sustainable for churches to be able to afford ordained elders. Other denominations and faith traditions have promoted bi-vocational ministry for this very reason.

As indicated prior to this, the success of the project was going to be dependent on the outcomes Embrace Church was going to measure. These included worship attendance, professions of faith, and baptisms. Embrace Church's 2012 statistics were taken and compared to the 2013 statistics to see how they measured with their bi-vocational leaders in place with the diverse communities as seen in figure 9.

Figure 9.

2012 Embrace Church Statistics Compared to 2013 Statistics²⁸

	Attendance	Professions of Faith	Baptisms
2012	265	40	10
2013	300	72	13
% Growth	13.2%	80%	30%

Conclusion

It has been the writer's thesis to understand there has been a significant decline within the UMC, and in all mainline denominations. The decline has come in accordance with worship attendance, membership, professions of faith, baptisms, and church closures. All the people categories have decreased, but the financial expenses have increased over the past forty years, especially considering inflation. The solution has been to reset the financial baseline by introducing a model for recovering a theology of bi-vocational ministry within the UMC and to focus on opportunities for planting new faith communities. The case study of Embrace Church's bi-vocational ministers shows that this model can work and be effective when implemented for congregations that struggle to meet yearly budget. This model may not work in all settings because it takes willing and called individuals and context into account as significant factors along with the

²⁸ These were numbers that were compiled by Embrace Church and reported to The Kentucky Annual Conference of the UMC.

attitude of a given congregation. Embrace Church's model can become the norm for transforming the Church within UM congregations and mainline denominations as a whole in North America.

APPENDIX A
WEEKLY PRODUCTIVITY REPORT

Weekly Productivity Report
 Week of: _____
 Presented to: Rosario Picardo, Lead Pastor
 Submitted by:

LETTERS		
	Name	Purpose of Letter
1.		
2.		
3.		

MEETINGS, APPOINTMENTS, OTHER		
Date	Type	Significant Notes

PROJECTS, ASSIGNMENTS – ACCOMPLISHMENTS	
Project	Status

MINISTRY UPDATES – GOALS FOR THE WEEK	
1.	
2.	

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS	
1.	
2.	

PERSONAL/SCHEDULE UPDATES	
1.	
2.	

PRAISE REPORTS OR PRAYER REQUESTS	
1.	

APPENDIX B
THE PARTICIPANTS



Rev. Rosario Picardo
Lead Pastor

Rosario (Roz) is the founding and Lead Pastor of Embrace Church and husband of Callie. He happens to be “a very regular dude” that God has entrusted with a vision for ministering to the people of Lexington. Roz grew up in western New York as a first-generation Sicilian-American. In 2003, he earned his B.A. in Religion from Houghton College, and in 2007 he earned his Masters of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary. He is currently working on his Doctorate of Ministry at United Theological Seminary. Roz also spent four years in the Marine Reserves and five years in the Navy Reserves. He first fell in love with urban ministry while attending The Rock/La Roca United Methodist Church and working there as the custodian. He eventually became the associate pastor before being called to church planting. The Kentucky Annual Conference appointed Roz as a church planter in 2008. He then launched Embrace Church at the Kentucky Theater, and he was ordained as an elder in the United Methodist Church. Since the launch of Embrace, Roz has had his car stolen and sold for twenty bucks, his tires slashed, his house vandalized, and his life threatened because of his dedication to carrying out his call. In 2012 Roz started Picardo Coaching LLC, a consulting group that helps church leaders plant faith communities and revitalize existing congregations. A new edition of Roz’s book *Embrace: A Church Plant That Broke All the Rules* will be available soon from Pickwick Publications.



Chuck Gutenson
Teaching Pastor

Dr. Charles (Chuck) Gutenson is a church consultant and former Chief Operating Officer of Sojourners. He previously served ten years at Asbury Seminary in Kentucky, most recently as the professor of Theology and Philosophy. He received a M.Div. from Asbury in 1995 and a PhD in Philosophical Theology from Southern Methodist University in 2000. He is a member of the International Society of Theta Phi, an honor society for theological students, scholars in the field of religion and outstanding religious leaders. Chuck is the author of multiple books (one forthcoming) and numerous articles on a variety of theological and philosophical topics. Check out Chuck's newest books: *The Right Church: Live Like the First Christians?*, and *Church Worth Getting Up For*.



Josh Wynn
The Gathering Pastor

Josh grew up on a cattle farm in a small town in western Kentucky. He is “just a normal down to earth guy that believes that there is more to life than most people experience.” His relationship with Jesus started when he was seventeen. Soon after that he went on to college at Mid-Continent University where he earned a B.S. in Psychology and

Counseling, and then he earned his Masters of Divinity at Asbury Seminary. He is the pastor of The Gathering community at Embrace. Through The Gathering, Josh works with a team to provide hospitality and care to community members by offering a free hot meal, food baskets, and an inviting space in which to worship and fellowship. He also spends time securing services for Embrace's marginalized neighbors and provides leadership for the Downtown community.



Justin Barringer
Outreach Pastor

Justin is the husband of Rachel and the father of Israel. He earned his Masters of Divinity from Asbury Seminary where he also worked for the Ministry for Global Community Formation. Eventually Justin hopes to earn a PhD so he has an excuse to wear a sweater vest. As the Outreach Pastor at Embrace, Justin seeks to foster partnerships that will support the expansion of Embrace's ministries to the city. Justin also organizes service projects and works to secure funding to help Embrace bless the community. Justin has been a missionary in China and Greece, worked extensively among homeless people in Nashville, and served at mercy and justice organizations like The Dream Center and Sojourners. He also serves as the Director of Education for LOVEboldly and works as a freelance writer and editor. He is co-editor of the book *A Faith Not Worth Fighting For: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions About Christian Nonviolence*, and the author of the forthcoming book *No More Excuses: 101 Ways to Love and Serve Others* from Seedbed Publications.



Bryan Langlands
Georgetown Missionary Mobilizer

Like his pastor friend Roz, Bryan is just a regular dude. He is married to an amazing woman named Amanda, and they have three beautiful daughters. Bryan grew up in Virginia Beach, but he loves North Carolina and can't decide whether surfing at Topsail Island or climbing Grandfather Mountain is his favorite hobby ever. Bryan currently serves as the Campus Minister at Georgetown College and as the Missionary Mobilizer for a new missional community that Embrace is launching in Georgetown, KY called MOVEMENT of faith and action. MOVEMENT seeks to make disciples who disciple others and develop Christian community on the margins in Georgetown.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "Africans in America/Part 3/Richard Allen." PBS. Accessed April 08, 2014.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3p97.html>.
- "African Methodist Episcopal Church - World Council of Churches." African Methodist Episcopal Church - World Council of Churches. Accessed April 09, 2014.
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/african-methodist-episcopal-church>.
- Anderson, Bernhard W. *The Living World of the Old Testament*. Harlow, England: Longman, 1988.
- "Amos 7:14-15." In *The Holy Bible: ESV, English Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments*. New York: American Bible Society, 2001. Accessed September 8, 2012. <http://www.biblegateway.com>.
- "Asbury Seminary Receives... \$5 Million Gift to Launch Church Planting," Asbury Theological Seminary, November 12, 2013, accessed April 15, 2014, <https://www.asburyseminary.edu/asbury-seminary-receives-commitment-5-million-gift-launch-church-planting-initiative/>. Asbury's 2023 Strategic Plan is a 60-page document with 10 main points encompassing it
- Bailey, Venus. "History of Epworth Church," interview by author, February 02, 2014.
- Barringer, Justin. "Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions." Interview.
- Bellini, Peter J. "Participation and Some Implications for a Theology of Missions." In *Participation: Epistemology and Mission Theology*, 163-72. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010.
- Black, Dan, Gary Gates, Seth Sanders, and Lowell Taylor. "Why Do Gay Men Live in San Francisco?" Accessed February 14, 2012.
<http://sfpl.info/pdf/main/glc/glbtsfdemographics.pdf>.

- Blake, Couey John. "Amos Vii 10-17 and Royal Attitudes towards Prophecy in the Ancient Near East." *Vetus Testamentum*, no. 58 (2008): 300-14. Accessed September 13, 2012. Old Testament Abstracts, EBSCOhost.
- Blanchard, John. "Amos." In *Major Points from the Minor Prophets.*, 809-1214. EP Books, 2012. Kindle.
- Bloom, Linda. "Pan-Methodists Celebrate Together." United Methodist Connections. May 1, 2012. Accessed April 09, 2014.
<http://umcconnections.org/2012/05/01/pan-methodists-celebrate-together/>.
- "Brother Lawrence," - Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed April 10, 2014,
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/lawrence>.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Message of Nehemiah: God's Servant in a Time of Change*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998.
- Bruce, F. F. "Acts 18." In *The Book of the Acts*, 346. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988.
- Buechner, Frederick. *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).
- Calvin, John. "Commentary on Amos, Part 16." Sion's Jewish Instruction Pages. Accessed October 02, 2012.
<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/m.sion/cvams-16.htm>.
- Campbell, Dennis M. *The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination in Methodism*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- Church Demographics From MissionInsite*. Report. Accessed February 7, 2012.
<http://www.missioninsite.com/>.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2009. Kindle.
- Davis, Lindsey "2014 Appointments," e-mail message to author, April 10, 2014.
- Dorsett, Terry W. *Developing Leadership Teams in the Bi-vocational Church*. Bloomington: CrossBooks, 2010. Kindle.
- Eblen, Tom. "History of Epworth Church." Interview by author. February 3, 2012.

_____. "Kentucky.com." Kentucky.com. January 10, 2011. Accessed February 21, 2012. <http://www.kentucky.com/2010/11/10/1518338/tom-eblen-this-bike-shops-clientele.html>.

Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing Count 2009. Report. Lexington: Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative in Collaboration with Catholic Action Center, 2009.

Fee, Gordon D. "First Word for the Disruptive-Idle: Imitate Paul (3:7-10)." In *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2009. Kindle.

Fensham, F. Charles. *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982. Kindle.

Ferreiro, Alberto, and Thomas C. Oden. "Amos 7:1-17." In *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: The Twelve Prophets*, 109. Vol. XIV. Old Testament. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Finley, Thomas John. *Joel, Amos, Obadiah: An Exegetical Commentary*. [Dallas, TX]: Biblical Studies Press, 2003.

Giles, Terry. "A Note on the Vocation of Amos in 7:14." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, no. 111 (1992): 690-91. Accessed September/October, 2012. Old Testament Abstracts, EBSCOhost.

Good, Kenneth R. "Albright College Sesquicentennial." Albright College Sesquicentennial. Accessed September 27, 2012. <http://www.albright.edu/150/lifeandtimes.html>.

Green, Hollis L. *Why Churches Die; a Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1972.

Grenz, Stanley J. *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

_____. *Theology for the Community of God*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994. Kindle.

Gutenson, Charles E. "Unity and Schism in The Early Church." In *The Right Church: Live like the First Christians*, 23-59. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012.

_____. "Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions." Interview.

Hadley, Jensen David. *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

Hahn, Heather. "Still in 2011 Numbers Show U.S. Members Still Sliding." UMC.org. August 2, 2012. Accessed October 24, 2012.
<http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=IwL4KnN1LtH>.

Haynes, Donald W. "Â The United Methodist Portal." Â The United Methodist Portal. April 3, 2008. Accessed October 25, 2012.
<http://www.umportal.org/article.asp?id=3302>.

Hays, J. Daniel, and Tremper Longman. "Overview of Amos." In *Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic and Apocalyptic Books of the Old Testament*, 4347-357. [Grand Rapids, Mich.]: Zondervan, 2010. Kindle.

Heitzenrater, Richard P. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Henderson, D. Michael. *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*. Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1997

Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Ac 18:1–6). Peabody: Hendrickson.

Hock, Ronald F. *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

Hubbard, David Allan., Glenn W. Barker, and Douglas Stuart. *Word Biblical Commentary: Hosea-Jonah*. Vol. 31. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982.

Hunter, George G. *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011. Kindle.

"John 12:24." In *The Holy Bible: ESV, English Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments*. New York: American Bible Society, 2001. Accessed September 8, 2012. <http://www.biblegateway.com>. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version.

"John 17:22-23." In *The Holy Bible: ESV, English Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments*. New York: American Bible Society, 2001. Accessed October 6, 2012. <http://www.biblegateway.com>.

Joyner, F. Belton. *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers: Exploring Christian Faith*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

_____. *The Unofficial United Methodist Handbook for Pastors*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007. Kindle.

Keller, Marie Noël. "Luke's Narration." In *Priscilla and Aquila: Paul's Coworkers in Christ Jesus*, 441-42. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010. Kindle.

Kinghorn, Kenneth C. *The Heritage of American Methodism*. Strasbourg, France: Éditions Du Signe, 1999.

Langlands, Bryan. "Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions." Interview.

"M.A. in Church Planting - Asbury Theological Seminary," Asbury Theological Seminary, accessed April 15, 2014,
<https://www.asburyseminary.edu/academics/degrees/master-of-arts/m-a-in-church-planting/>.

Martin, Francis, and Thomas C. Oden. *Acts*. Vol. 5. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006.

McKinley, Rick. "New England Annual Conference," telephone interview by author, March 30, 2014. Rick is the New Church Development Director for the New England Annual Conference of The UMC.

Miller, George, and James Nelson. *Short Description of the Effective Grace of God in the Enlightened, Protestant Preacher, Jacob Albright*. PDF. Dayton, Ohio:
<Http://www.united.edu/EUB-Resources/EUB-Resources/menu-id-359.html>.

Miller, Patricia. "Restructuring And United Methodist Decline." The Confessing Movement RSS. March 22, 2010. Accessed August 14, 2013.
<http://confessingumc.org/happenings-around-the-church/restructuring-and-united-methodist-decline---learning-from-the-past---the-methodist-eub-merger/>.

"Mission Statement." In *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, 2008., 87. Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 2008.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

Montana, Sam. "What Caused the Great Recession of 2008-2009?," All Articles RSS, accessed April 15, 2014, <http://economics-the-economy.knoji.com/what-caused-the-great-recession-of-20082009/>.

Mowry, LaCugna Catherine, "The Practical Trinity," *Christian Century* 109/22 (July 15-22, 1992): 679.

Muthiah, Robert A. *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-first Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context*. Eugene, OR.: Pickwick Publications, 2009.

Nelson, John. *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*. Edited by Thomas Jackson. Vol. 1. London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1865.

_____. *An Extract of John Nelson's Journal Being an Account of God's Dealing with His Soul... Likewise, the Oppressions He Met with ... Written by Himself*, vi.

Olds, Wes. "History of Epworth Church," interview by author, February 02, 2014.

Patrick, Kelli. "Griffin VanMeter | Urban Ninja." Lexington. December 1, 2008. Accessed February 17, 2012. http://lexington.skirt.com/he's_so_original/griffin-vanmeter-urban-ninja.

Perkins, John. *With Justice for All: A Strategy for Community Development*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007. Kindle.

Phoenix Park Survey Report. Report. Lexington: Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative in Collaboration with Catholic Action Center, 2009.

Picardo, Rosario. "Embrace Church." Embrace Church. January 18, 2009. Accessed May 16, 2012. <http://embraceyourcity.com/>.

Rapske, Brian. *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1994),

Rendle, Gilbert R. *Journey in the Wilderness: New Life for Mainline Churches*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010. Kindle.

_____. *Back to Zero: The Search to Rediscover the Methodist Movement*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011. Kindle.

Rodriguez, Irma "History of Epworth Church," interview by author, February 02, 2014.

Ryun, Jim, Ned Ryun, and Drew Ryun. *Heroes among Us: Deep within Each of Us Dwells the Heart of a Hero*. Shippensburg, PA: Treasure House, 2002. Kindle.

Shockley, Gary A. *New Church Starts Update*. Technical paper. Nashville: Path 1 New Church Starts Division at GBOD, 2012.

Simmons, Martha J., and Frank A. Thomas. *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010. Kindle.

Simundson, Daniel J. "Amos and Amaziah." In *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. Accessed September 13, 2012. www.sermons.com.

"Synergy About Our Definitions: All Forms of a Word (noun, Verb, Etc.) Are Now Displayed on One Page." Merriam-Webster. Accessed August 14, 2013. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/synergy>.

"The Story of Boehm and Otterbein." Boehm and Otterbein. Accessed October 01, 2012. <http://ub.org/about/boehm-otterbein/>.

Thomas, John. "Richard Allen, Church-planting Hero." February 7, 2012. Accessed April 8, 2014. <http://www.newcitychurch.org/2012/02/07/richard-allen-church-planting-hero/>.

Throntveit, Mark A. *Ezra-Nehemiah*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992. Kindle.

Tunstill, June. "History of Epworth Church." Interview by author. February 2, 2012.

"UMC Pathone." UMC Pathone. Accessed October 24, 2012. <http://path1.org/Impn>.

_____. UMC Pathone, Lay Missionary Planting Network, accessed October 24, 2012, <http://path1.org/Impn>.

Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Ac 18:3). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Volf, Miroslav. *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.

_____. "'The Trinity Is Our Social Program': The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement." *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (1998): 403-23.

Weems, Lovett H. *Focus: The Real Challenges That Face the United Methodist Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012. Kindle.

Wesley, John. "Global Ministries." Sermon 115. Accessed October 25, 2012. <http://www.umcmmission.org/Find-Resources/Global-Worship-and-Spiritual-Growth/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-115-The-Ministerial-Office>.

_____. *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 9: "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Upon-Tyne."* Rupert E. Davis, ed., Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.

_____. *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 9: "Directions Given to the Band-Societies."* Rupert E. Davis, ed., Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.

_____. *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 9: "The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design."* Rupert E. Davis, ed., Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.

_____. *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol. 3. Amazon Digital Services. Kindle.

Willimon H. William, and Robert L. Wilson, "Rekindling the Flame - Chapter One," *Rekindling the Flame - Chapter One*, 1987, accessed April 10, 2014, <http://www.cmpage.org/rekindling/chapt1.html#graph>. This group formed the Evangelical Church of North America in Portland, Oregon, which now has 127 congregations and over 11,500 members. Methodist statistics are from the annual editions of the *General Minutes of the Annual Conferences of The United Methodist Church* (Council on Finance and Administration, Evanston, Ill., 1968-1985).

Witherington, Ben. "I Thessalonians 2:9." In *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary*, 38. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2006.

_____. *New Testament History: A Narrative Account* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 5027, Kindle.

_____. *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), Kindle.

_____. *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2011), Kindle.

"What's New." What's New. Accessed August 14, 2013. <http://www.henrinouwen.org/>.

Wood, Fred. "Clash Between Amaziah and Amos (vv. 10-17)." In *Amos*, 120-21. Minor Prophets Series. Bloomington: Cross Books, 2009.

Worthington, Charlotte. "History of Epworth Church." Interview by author. January 30, 2012.

Wynn, Joshua. "Bi-vocational Pastor Interview Questions." Interview.

Yrigoyen, Charles, and Susan E. Warrick. *Historical Dictionary of Methodism*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996.